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BURMA

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Kachin leader offers US huge opium haul

Three Pagodas Pass, Burma — A Burmese resistance leader yesterday invited the United States to pick up more than 5,000 pounds of raw opium he said his troops captured from the Burmese army.

"It would be best for US officials to fly up to the Kachin state and pick up the opium. They are welcome to it without any conditions," said Brang Seng, chairman of the Kachin Independence Organisation.

"It seems the State Department is reluctant to contact me, but I will order the opium handed over to anyone they want," Brang Seng said at the jungle base of an allied resistance group at Three Pagodas Pass near the Thai-Burmese border.

On Saturday, a spokesman for the Kachin group said that 5,026 pounds (2,280 kg) of raw opium had been captured from the Burmese army's 47th Regiment near the town of Manyot in the Kachin state, 965 kilometres north of Rangoon.

Brang Seng said the seizure took place on March 4, correcting an earlier impression the fighting had been on March 11 when the report was received.

He said his troops lost 18 men killed and put Burmese losses at 60-80



BRANG SENG — 5,000 pounds of opium captured from Burmese army.

dead in the fighting near Manyot.

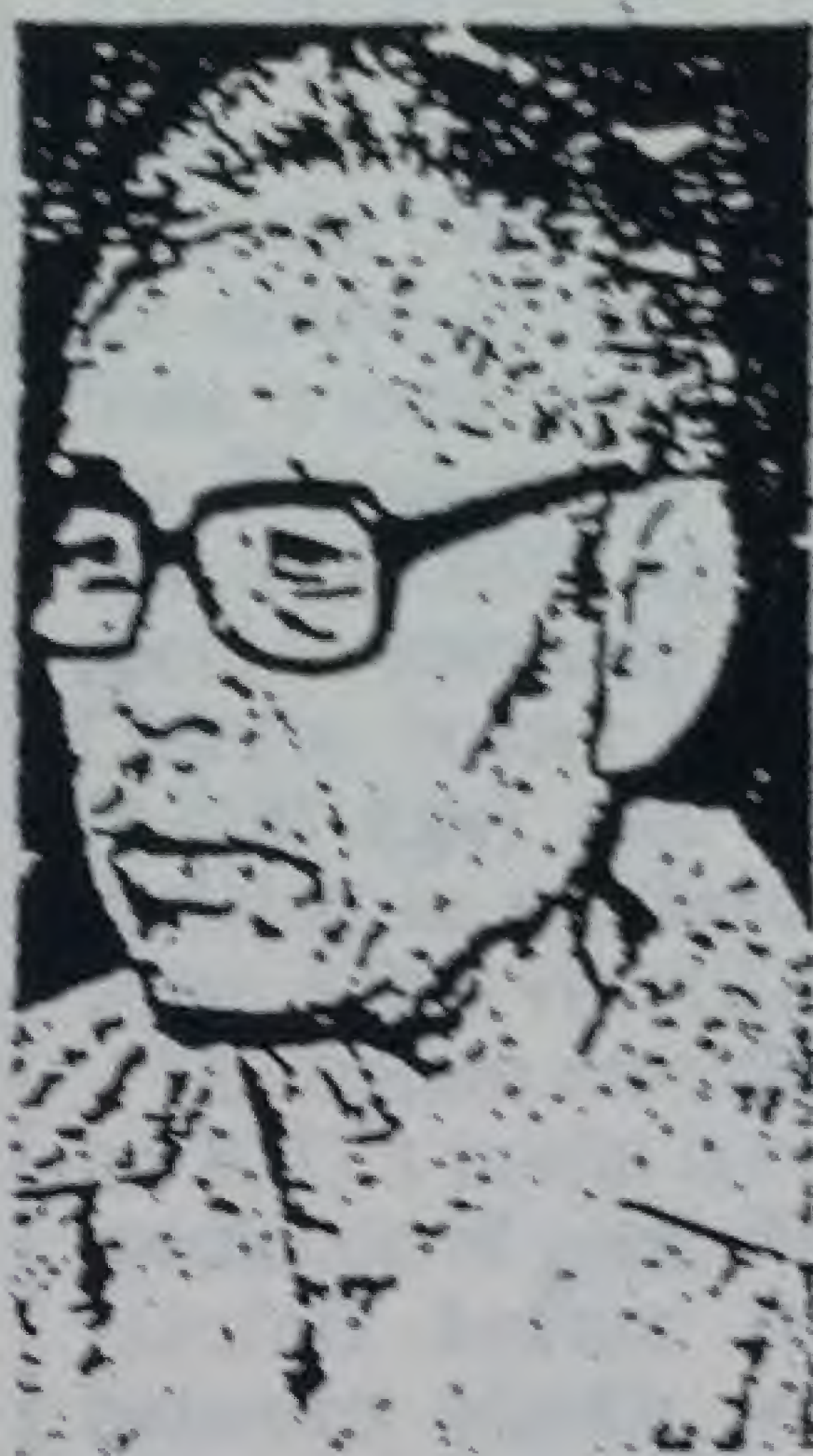
He said it was believed the opium was from the Shan States and being transported to the central Burmese city of Mandalay.

The Kachin leader, a former school principal, said he wanted to meet with officials of the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA).

"They have supplied helicopters and herbicide to the Burmese government in an effort to eliminate poppy growing, but each year it increases," he said.

He said the herbicide has caused many people in the sprayed areas to become ill.

"I want to ask the DEA whether they are happy with the results of this



SAW MAW REH — admits traffickers are using minority territory.

policy," he said.

Brang Seng said the capture of the opium showed that Burmese government troops were themselves heavily involved in narcotics trafficking.

"It may be Rangoon government policy to oppose drug trafficking, but the local government military commanders are obviously involved in the trade," he said.

He said Kachin State soldiers have captured opium in attacks on government outposts before, but never in such a large quantity.

Brang Seng called for an end to US aid to the Rangoon government and for US pressure to bring a peaceful end to three decades of civil war in Burma.



NAI NONLA — difficult to check all border traffic.

He said opium growing has largely been eliminated from Kachin state, and his group's income comes from the sale of jade and gold and taxes on land, forestry and fishing.

But he said that in neighbouring Shan State, Burmese government oppression had forced many people into hill areas where the only profitable crop was opium.

He said once there is peace and development it will be possible to shut down opium production in Burma.

This month a State Department report called Burma "the world's largest producer of illicit opium."

It said Burmese production rose last year to an estimated 925-1,230 met-

ric tons from an estimated 700-1,100 tons in 1986.

One minority leader admitted yesterday that drug traffickers may use minority territory as smuggling routes but denied his movement was involved.

National Democratic Front chairman Saw Maw Reh said it was possible some narcotics came through the border pass here into Thailand.

However, suppressing the illicit activity was difficult because the area under the NDF control was vast.

Saw Maw Reh, who is chairman of the Karenni National Progressive Party, one of the 10 groups in the 12-year-old NDF, said his movement was firmly against narcotics but had not enough men to enforce the policy.

Mon National Liberation Army leader Nai Nonla said his group, which is based here, had arrested a number of traffickers trying to get through Three Pagodas Pass.

A courier was arrested during the Chinese New Year while heading to Thailand with two packages of No. 4 grade heroin, he said.

Several hundred traders use the pass to transport goods across the border, he said, and every day 60-80 bullock carts passed through, making it difficult to check them all.

one caught smuggling 1 kg of raw opium or in would be given a maximum penalty of death. Pushers are almost routinely executed in China after summary trials, which seem aimed only at confirming the guilt of the accused rather than investigating the drug networks operate.

Given the vast amount of money involved, and China's inexhaustible pool of couriers, it is hardly surprising that these stiff penalties do not appear to have much deterrent effect. A kilogram of 90-95 percent pure No. 4 heroin costs Rmb 8-9,000 (US\$1,532-1,723) in Mong Ko. Across the border in Mangshih or Baoshan the same amount fetched up to Rmb 50,000, while in Kunming the price can be as high as Rmb 100,000. In Hong Kong, the street price for diluted, 50-70 percent pure heroin, is HK\$500-500 (US\$60-70) per gram.

While narcotics experts attributes China's apparent inability to deal with the drugs problem to individual corruption and an inexperienced police force, Rangoon's attitude towards the narcotics issue has made drug money an integral part of Burma's economy. In order to further neutralize the former CPB as a viable fighting force, Rangoon has encouraged the former communist commanders to invest their drug fortunes in property and joint ventures in central Burma, far away from their traditional areas. "In this way, they [former CPB commanders] will have a vested interest in maintaining the alliance with the government. If they own houses and shops in Mandalay and Rangoon, they would lose these if they decided to turn their guns against the government," a source close to the former commanders said.

The impact of this policy is also felt in India, where drug addiction is spreading -- notably in the northeastern region bordering Burma. In India's Manipur state, the number of drug addicts has risen from 600 in 1988 to an estimated 15,000 in 1991, most of them in the 15-23-year age group. In 1989 there were 48 known AIDS victims in the whole of India. Health authorities now estimate that in five years Manipur alone will have 1,600 cases. While most drugs cross the Indian border near Moreh in Manipur, substantial quantities are also believed to be smuggled across Chin state to Mizoram, partly for local use and partly in transit to Bangladesh and the port city of Chittagong, intelligence sources say.

Burma is also being severely affected by the ready availability of narcotics. Officially, the country has no more than 30,000 registered addicts, but unofficial estimates put the figure at 160,000 -- of whom at least 50 percent are already infected with the AIDS virus. The situation appears to be especially serious among the remaining 7-8,000 former CPB troops. In their area, heroin is cheaper than beer and sources in Mong Ko say the addiction rate among the rank-and-file is 80 percent. Some observers point out this may not be entirely unwelcome from Rangoon's perspective.

Apart from eroding the CPB as a fighting force, the first to become addicted in the towns of central Burma are youths, who equate to potential dissidents from the authorities point of view. "Universities and colleges have been closed since June 1988 and there are thousands of young people just spending their time in tea shops or trying to survive by doing odd jobs. These youths are being targeted by the pushers," a source in Rangoon said.

International concern over Burma's rapidly increasing heroin output, however, may prove a much thornier issue. Last November's drug-burning ceremony in Kokang was an apparent, albeit unconvincing, attempt by Rangoon to persuade the outside world that it was trying to do something about the problem.

Such charades apart, intelligence sources say the number of

KIO leader strongly rejects allegations of drug trade

Kachin State, one of the two poppy growing areas in northern Burma is expected to harvest about 27.2 tons of raw opium for the 1990-91 season.

The figure was provided by Brang Seng, the leader of an armed ethnic Kachin resistance group, who during a recent interview with the *Bangkok Nation*, strongly rejected Western allegations that his organization has supported or was involved in the lucrative drug trade.

Brang Seng, chairman of the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) which is allied to 20 other anti-government dissident movements in the Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB), estimated that 27.2 tons of opium will be produced this year, a slight increase over the 1989-90 figure of 21.68 tons.

For the 1990-91 harvest season, the eastern division of the Kachin State is expected to produce 6,000 vis (Burmese measurement) of opium (9,600 kgs), the Sadon special township area near the Chinese border about 3,000 vis (4,800 kgs) and the southern division in northern Shan State about 8,000 vis (12,800 kgs).

The figures are calculated based on KIO's initial surveys and the prediction of good climate with no rainfall before the harvest, between March and April, he said.

The 60-year-old leader, who was once denied an entry visa by the United States allegedly for his involvement in drug trade, maintained that the opium poppy cultivation was carried out by displaced villagers, who use the

drug as traditional herbal medicine and as well as dope for their beasts of burden such as mules and elephants.

The KIO had no policy to thrive economically on the narcotic business nor supported the cultivation of the poppy. Instead, it has since 1964 implemented a program to eradicate opium cultivation and drug addicts from Kachin State, which has cleared the western and northern parts of poppy plantation, he claimed.

"It is totally untrue that I or the KIO deal in drugs," he said.

"Since then, the cultivation of poppy in northern and western Kachinland has ceased totally," he claimed, adding that currently only three areas in eastern and southern parts of the state still cultivate poppy fields.

He estimated that only "about 2,000 villagers, mainly Chinese or other ethnic nationals," are still involved in the poppy growing in three remote jungle highlands as a result of being "driven out of their own farmlands in lowland Kachin by Burmese troops."

At least three kinds of taxation are imposed on villagers -- land permission, land clearing and harvesting taxes, he said.

He also claimed that there are no heroin laboratories in Kachin State, which covers an area of 48,038 sq. miles with a population of about 2.5 million.

He claimed that all opium poppy fields in Kachin State would be wiped out within three years if the civil war in Burma ended and when genuine peace returned to the country. --The Nation, Feb 20.

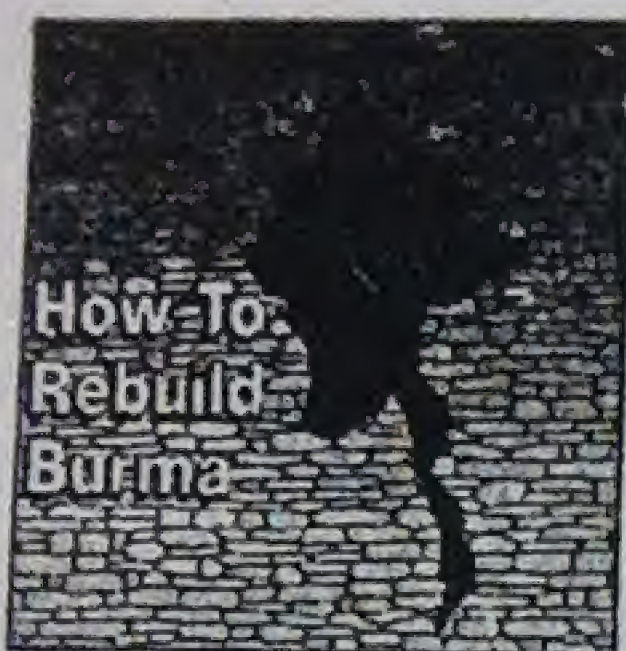
heroin refineries in the Mong Ko-Kokang area have increased from 17 six months ago to 23 known locations today. Other refining facilities have recently been established in the Wa Hills. The area under poppy cultivation is also expanding with each growing season. The only area east of the Salween -- apart from the southern valley in Kokang -- where poppies are not grown is in the northern Wa Hills, where Christian missionaries introduced citrus and other cash crops half a century ago.

Rangoon has invited UNFDAC to resume its crop substitution program in Burma, which was suspended after the 1988 military takeover. UN officials say they are willing to return if the project can be properly monitored and they have access to the opium growing areas. Given Burma's present political turmoil, it seems unlikely Rangoon can afford to do more than make a few cosmetic gestures aimed at improving its international image. In Ruili and Mangshih, meanwhile, the flow of drugs down the Burma Road shows absolutely no sign of diminishing.

-- Far Eastern Economic Review, March 28 □

Masses in revolt against stifling authoritarian grip

By REVIEW Correspondents



Whether a more popular figure than Sein Lwin can be produced from within the ruling Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) to placate the country with promises of economic reforms is something that will shortly be tested. But clearly many Burmese are insisting that political liberalisation is a necessary step to any serious economic changes.

Should Burma revert back to something like the multi-party system that existed before Ne Win's army imposed one-party socialist rule in 1962, it is safe only to say that a broad range of parties would surface — though the widely discredited term "socialist" might not be employed for some years.

During the latest anti-government riots, observers have been struck by the way in which young demonstrators — most of them born under Ne Win's rule — had drawn on Burmese nationalist traditions dating back to the 1930s, sometimes in minute detail such as the peacock symbol of independence and the flag of the Dohbama Asiayone (Our Burma Association), nationalist movement under British rule.

Socialist ideas permeated most components of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), the nationalist coalition that took Burma through independence in 1948 — though the communists broke away into insurrection soon after. The AFPFL split in the late 1950s, into the "Clean" AFPFL, a moderate social democratic wing led by prime minister U Nu which later renamed itself the Union Party, and the "Stable" AFPFL, a more radical grouping. In 1958, U Nu invited the army chief of staff, Gen. Ne Win, to take over the premiership and prepare the country for elections.

Ne Win was originally intended to hold office for six months, but stayed until elections were held in 1960. U Nu's party won office again, but the election result produced a more fractured political scene overall. Several regional parties emerged, which, with ethnic insurgencies growing in the Shan and Kachin states, led U Nu's

government to propose greater regional autonomy. Citing threats to national unity, Ne Win's "Revolutionary Council" seized power in March 1962.

U Nu and other senior figures were arrested, and existing political parties banned. (U Nu went into exile in India, but has since returned to live in quiet retirement in Rangoon.) Ne Win abolished the bicameral parliamentary system and separation of judicial powers inherited from the British, and closed the vigorous independent press which had been the most effective check on government powers under U Nu.

The immediate nationalisation of all commerce and industry, and the heightened xenophobia introduced by Ne Win, created an exodus of several hundred thousand Indian and Chinese residents over the following three years.

The speed of nationalisation met with some opposition within the leader-

ship and prompted the departure of Ne Win's deputy Aung Gyi, now a prominent dissident. But the anti-foreign measures were popular even if they did destroy much of the infrastructure and so play a major role the country's subsequent impoverishment. The isolationism in Burma's foreign policy, reflecting its inward-looking nationalism, was highlighted by its 1979 decision to withdraw even from the non-aligned movement.

The Buddhist clergy, traditionally another centre of political power, were controlled, in return for various privileges, under a BSPP-directed committee, Sangha Mahanikaya. Secret police created networks of informers. The Pyithu Hluttaw (People's Assembly), which became the sole source of authority, was itself little more than an adjunct to the BSPP, which Ne Win expanded from a cadre party to a mass party claiming 1.5 million members. Yet the army remains the core of the BSPP, with about 90% of its ranks being party members.

While acknowledging Burma's drastic economic decline, some foreign analysts wonder how many Burmese will want to disavow Ne Win's political system. Minoru Kiryu, a director of Tokyo's Institute of Developing Economies who has followed Burmese affairs for 25 years, thinks a one-party system might be approved by a majority as long as it was accompanied by genuine economic reforms.

Caution about the prospects for economic liberalisation is also sounded by a Western-trained Burmese economist working for a large bank in Southeast Asia, who said that most of the Burmese elite still wished to avoid slavishly following "the Thai path."

For various reasons, including fierce national pride, there was still "a lot of residual support" for Ne Win's broad notion that "Thailand, whatever its successes, had compromised too much in its pursuit of development, given the Thai-Chinese too much free rein, and generally prostituted the country to foreigners." This dimension to Burmese thinking was broadly based, and would survive any transition to another regime, the economist said. Such remarks also show that Burma's historical rivalry with Thailand burns strong — and somewhat perversely, given Burma's current mendicant condition.

Much will depend on the attitude of the army officer corps, in particular the professionally trained graduates of the Defence Service Academy (DSA) at Maymyo, and others who took military training after graduating from civilian universities. Mostly ethnic Burmese and a few Chins, these now form about two-thirds of the officer corps in the 170,000-strong army. The first batch of DSA cadets graduated in 1960 and are now pushing into higher ranks, against



Free the economy and bring back democracy

By Tyn Myint-U



Events of recent weeks, leading to the 8-12 August uprising in Burma and the forced ouster of President Sein Lwin, have demonstrated the existence of a popular desire for radical political and economic change.

The government, responding to peaceful protests with brutality and an almost unthinkable disregard for human rights, has revealed that, for a quarter of a century, socialist rhetoric and constitutional one-party rule have been mere facades for the maintenance of power by an army elite.

Burma stands today on the brink of economic and political disaster. Unless immediate steps are taken to transfer power to a representative and responsible government and reverse the economic and political situation, present conditions will lead to widespread famine, total civil war and the undermining of the national security of a country which was once one of the richest and most peaceful in Southeast Asia.

There must be an immediate and complete change of the present political system to a genuine democratic system based on the principles of freedom and the equality of all people. Such a system would restore the two fundamental requirements for rejuvenating the spirit of the people and infusing them with enthusiasm to work for a better future, namely human rights and direct participation in choosing the rulers.

It will restore a government responsible to the people and the much needed two-way process of communication between the people and the government. Both of these have been sadly lacking in the country for the past 26 years.

A second and equally urgent need is for the immediate implementation of policies and programmes for the rapid development of the economy. While the role of the state will diminish as private enterprise, both national and foreign, respond to the free-enterprise system, the government must assume the responsibility for formulating appropriate policies and providing the financial and physical infrastructure for the development of different sectors. The new policy must include:

- Liberalisation and opening up of all non-strategic sectors of the economy to the private sector. This implies the dismantling of the socialist system of production and distribution, which has proved a complete failure not only in Burma but elsewhere too.

- Restoration of confidence in the country's currency, by implementation of a prudent monetary policy to ensure domestic price stability, and an exchange-rate policy which takes into account the supply and demand conditions for foreign currencies. The introduction of free markets for domestically produced goods and, with few exceptions, for imported goods would assist sound monetary and foreign-exchange policies. At the same time, it would eliminate the black-market system which has proved to be the bane of the country's economy.

- A simple and effective fiscal system for ensuring revenues for the government's essential administrative and redistributive activities.

- Opening up of the economy to private foreign investment in a suitable



Tyn Myint-U: a prescription.

range of activities through a carefully formulated foreign investment policy, directed towards encouraging the flow of foreign capital, technology, management skills and marketing know-how into industries which can contribute to output, employment and above all export promotion. The possible negative impact of foreign direct investment need not be a problem if this is carefully monitored and regulated. Many self-reliant countries such as Japan and South Korea have used foreign direct investment judiciously to assist in the development of their countries. Burma should take advantage of their experience.

- Review of all existing and proposed foreign aid and loan-funded programmes and projects with a view to ensuring maximum productivity, efficiency and

complementarity with the private sector's economic activities. Furthermore, in this age of economic interdependence, Burma should play a more active role in regional economic cooperation schemes and restructure its economy in line with the fundamental changes which are taking place in the global economic environment.

- A coherent plan or set of guidelines for economic development through which the private as well as the public sectors can be stimulated to undertake investment and production in activities contributing to the goals of economic growth, employment promotion, and improvement in the country's international economic position. The country should aim for rapid economic development in order to fulfil the basic needs of its people. A major element should be human-resources development, including enhanced programmes for education in various fields and for the development of science and technology.

The disastrous civil war of the past 40 years must be brought to an immediate end. A fair and just solution must be found. Federalism must become a cornerstone of the new constitution. Local governments responsible to the local people must be granted control over a wide range of social and economic fields.

The people themselves, whether Burman, Mon, Shan, Arakanese, Karen, Kachin, Chin or other must all fully and together participate in the political process. Constitutional guarantees must exist to protect the legitimate interests of minority peoples and there must be an end to all forms of discrimination.

The present government realises that it is bankrupt of ideas with which to cope with the current state of affairs. It must transfer political power, immediately and completely, to an interim government of national reconciliation, composed of prominent Burmese outside the Burma Socialist Programme Party.

This interim government will take any and all necessary measures to deal with the current economic situation and ensure that adequate food supplies are effectively distributed to prevent a famine. It will lay the groundwork for a free democratic society, inviting back the tens of thousands of Burmese now living abroad, creating political stability and paving the way for the election of a constituent assembly and a ratification of a new democratic constitution. It will negotiate with all insurgent groups to bring about a quick end to the civil war and build trust and friendship between all the peoples of the country. ■

Tyn Myint-U, a Burmese, is a senior UN official working on economic issues in Asia and the Pacific. He is married to Aye Aye Thant, daughter of the late UN secretary-general U Thant.

make it possible for the development of economic cooperation, solidarity and prosperity in this *Sunamaphume* — with Thailand at its centre," he said.

A flurry of diplomatic initiatives mounted by Chaovalit over the past year — notably his overtures to Lao leaders in early 1988 which ended a bloody Thai-Lao border war, his controversial visit to Rangoon in December 1988 to meet Burma's new military leadership and the more recent behind-the-scenes roles he was perceived to play in arranging the Chatichai-Hun Sen meeting — was seen as part of an effort to lay the groundwork for *Sunamaphume*.

The plan was given another airing by deputy supreme commander Gen. Pat Akkanibutr on 9 February, though Pat also failed to explain how the plan would be realised. Addressing a security-related forum, he said: "Our aim is to bring peace and prosperity to the peoples in this region. Thailand will not dominate other countries but rather it will serve as a centre for them to rely on." As if to mollify potential anxiety among Thailand's Asean partners, he added that Bangkok will continue to maintain friendly ties with them.

The concept of Thailand as the Southeast Asian peninsula's power centre has historical roots. Prior to and during World War II, the staunchly nationalistic regime of Field Marshal Pibulsongkram openly campaigned for a greater Thailand, encompassing those parts of Burma, southern China and Indochina inhabited by peoples ethnically similar to Thais. It was a distinctly expansionist proposal that was soon dropped.

The vague enunciation of the military's outlook by Chaovalit and Pat so far has generated little public debate. But already there is quiet concern in some intellectual circles that the military may be developing a new form of economic neo-colonialism. "Judging by the military leadership's action, there seems to be little moral consideration," commented social critic Sulak Sivaraksa. "The apparent haste to tap our neighbouring countries' rich natural resources smacks of the exploitative nature of the Japanese and South Koreans."

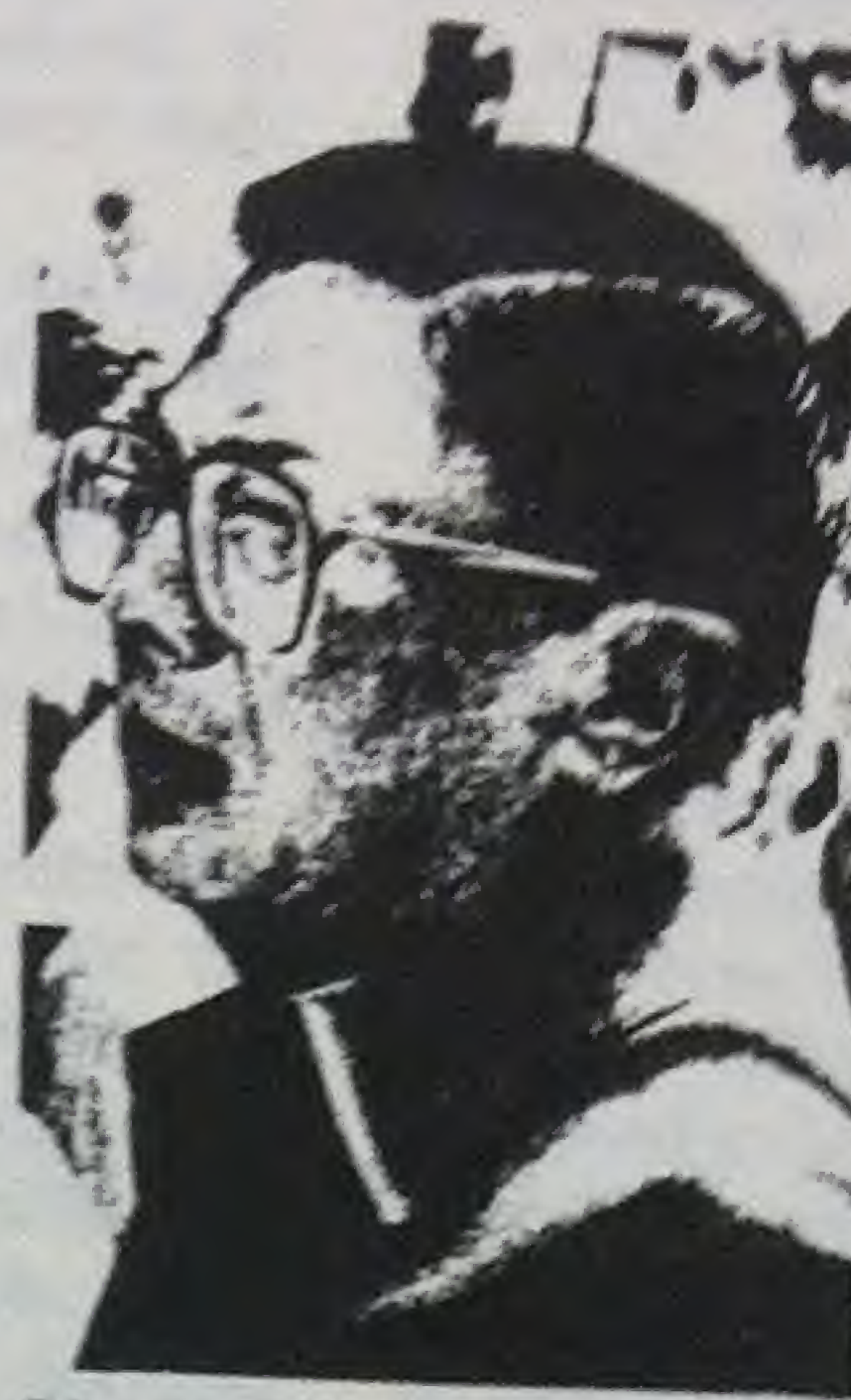
According to sources who maintain contacts with the Indochinese and Burmese leaderships, their keen interest to do business with Thailand is coloured by fears of being exploited or dominated economically. Adding to such fears is a recognition by these countries that Thailand has depleted much of its own natural wealth — particularly forest and marine resources — and now may well be eyeing the natural wealth of its neighbours.

There is similar concern among some Thai politicians. Opposition leader Boonchu Rojanastien, a one-time deputy prime minister in charge of economic affairs, warned at a recent seminar that excessive exploitation by Thailand's private sector could destroy any

new economic relationship with the country's neighbours. Applauding Chatichai's Indochina initiatives, Boonchu said Thailand must be sincere about creating trust and allow long-term relations to develop.

These concerns are not lost on Chatichai. The prime minister and his policy advisers have made clear their opposition to any neo-colonial approach, though whether their attempts to ensure a process of fair economic cross-fertilisation will succeed remains an open question.

Addressing a recent business forum, Chatichai urged Thai entrepreneurs to avoid "unilateral exploitation" of Indochina's abundant resources and instead seek to strike "two-way" deals that would serve the interests of all parties. He emphasised the importance of Thai technology transfer, particularly in joint ventures. In projects where raw materials from neighbours are imported for processing, Chatichai suggested that the suppliers should be allowed some equity participation.



Chaovalit: initiatives.

Observers say the right balance could lead to a healthy economic partnership with each partner's contribution complementing the other's. Vital raw materials that are readily available in Indochina and Burma — such as timber, marine products, gemstones, minerals and hydro power — badly needed by Thailand to support its next stage of industrial development. In addition, these countries, once opened up to foreign investment and trade, could provide a large market for Thai manufactured goods.

Although the final shape of a Cambodian settlement has yet to be worked out among the warring Khmer factions, Chatichai's initiative has spurred much interest here in trade and investment prospects in Laos and Vietnam. Thai businessmen are exploring the possibility of purchasing minerals and timber from Laos and even establishing department stores there. In Vietnam, the businessmen are seeking investments in hotels and are negotiating joint ventures in fishing and marine-products processing.

BURMA

Divergent reactions to Rangoon's instability Different strokes

By Bertil Lintner in Bangkok

As a direct outcome of the recent upheavals in Burma, when anti-government demonstrators demanded democracy and an end to the socialist system, Burma's immediate neighbours have become involved in its internal affairs for the first time in decades. In the process, the three most important countries — India, China and Thailand — have adopted completely different approaches.

India was one of the first countries to comment on the Burmese crisis. On 10 September 1988, New Delhi expressed its support for "the undaunted resolve of the Burmese people to achieve their democracy."

Later, when thousands of Burmese dissidents fled a bloody crackdown that resulted from the military takeover on 18 September, India became the only neighbour that adopted a clear-cut refugee policy. On 25 October, India's External Affairs Minister, P. V. Narashima Rao, told a parliamentary panel that "strict instructions have been issued not to turn back any genuine refugees seeking shelter in India."

One refugee camp was built at Leikhul in the Chandel district of Manipur state in northeastern India. Two more camps, mainly for students from the ethnic Chin minority, have been built at Champhai and Saiha in neighbouring Mizoram. Since then, news about the comparatively fair treatment received by refugees has filtered back to Burma, and an increasing number of students have fled to India. The number now is said to be about 800, and it is still increasing.

India's sympathetic attitude has been reflected also in the frankness of All-India Radio's (AIR) Burmese service. Previously, it attracted only a few listeners, mainly from Burma's large Indian community. Today, AIR has overtaken the BBC's Burmese service in popularity among the public at large.

"The BBC is government-sponsored, but still independent. AIR is run by the Indian Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and reflects official policy. That's even more important," said one observer.

The Burmese Government-controlled *Working People's Daily* has over the past few weeks published several vitriolic attacks on AIR, accusing it of interference "in Burma's

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...affairs." The 27 January issue of the newspaper also accused the Indian police of beating student refugees. This seems credible, but clearly emphasises official concern over the increasing number of students heading northwest for exile. Analysts suggest that India's stand has been prompted not only by the way it usually views itself as a "guardian of democracy" in the region, but also by considerations related to security and nationality.

India shares an 857-mile frontier with Burma and ethnic insurgents, mainly Nagas, use unadministered Burmese territory as a base for cross-border raids into India's sensitive northeast.

So far, Burma's only reaction to this situation has been to mount essentially futile, half-hearted military operations against the insurgents from India. In any case, the Burmese military has been stretched to the limit fighting several ethnic insurgencies within Burma. It is widely believed that India hopes that a new democratic government in Rangoon might try a more tactful political approach. A stable border could also result in increased trade between the two countries, analysts say.

Another consideration might be New Delhi's concern for the Indian community in Burma, which under a 1982 citizenship act has become stateless, or has been given a second-class citizenship by the Rangoon regime. Traditionally, the Burmese have looked down on the *kalis* — a derogatory word used to describe the Indo-Burmese. India might be assuming that its strong stand for democracy could help make life easier for this community in the future, according to some observers.

At one stage, China seemed to have a similar concern for the equally stateless and vulnerable Chinese community in Burma. Shortly after the military takeover, the Trade Minister Col Abel called in Zhan Dee, the commercial counsellor of the Chinese Embassy in Rangoon to discuss some trade arrangements that had been made prior to the August-September uprising.

The new regime, anxious to publish any evidence of foreign contacts, put a picture of the meeting on the front page of the *Working People's Daily* on 4 October. This brought a strong reaction from Rangoon's Chinese community, which approached the embassy to make its views known.

"If the Chinese Government is seen as cosy up with the detested military regime, the Sino-Burmese community may be victimised by angry crowds if there is another popular uprising," one Rangoon-based diplomat explained.

However, as the situation has calmed down — and border trade with China has picked up — that attitude may have changed, among the Sino-Burmese as well as the Chinese authorities.

Recently, Burma's Myanma Export Import Corp. (MEIC) signed its first official border-trade agreement with its counterpart in China's Yunnan province. Burma agreed to sell 1,500 tonnes of maize, valued at US\$180,000, in exchange for Chinese milk powder, soap and toothpaste.

In overall terms, this may not be especially significant. The total value of private, but officially sanctioned and taxed trade, as well as smuggling through rebel-held areas along the border, may be as high as Kyats 30 million (US\$4.6 million at the official rate) a day, according to some sources.

As many as 300 trucks leave Mandalay and Lashio in northern Burma for the Chinese border every day, these sources say, though most of the goods may come into Burma through areas controlled by communist and ethnic Kachin rebels. Either way, Chinese consumer goods are flooding the markets in most northern Burmese towns, and increasingly even in Rangoon.

But in order to encourage trade through the only two government-held crossing

On 22 November, the Thai Government granted temporary asylum to the thousands of Burmese students who fled to the Thai-Burmese border after the military stepped in. But then, on 14 December, the Thai army chief, Gen. Chaovalit Yongchaiyut, visited Rangoon and returned with lucrative logging and fishing deals — and began repatriating Burmese students (REVIEW, 9 Feb.).

The inconsistent Thai policy appears to have backfired and created considerable anti-Thai sentiment. Christopher Schacht, an Australian senator who recently visited Burma, quoted opposition politicians as saying that more than 100 Burmese fishing vessels are now lying idle in ports along the Irrawaddy delta, because fishing rights have been sold to Thai interests.

Reuters newsagency reported from Rangoon on 7 February that "the army has sold off concessions . . . so quickly and so cheaply that opposition politicians are warning about lasting environmental damage." Former prime minister U Nu said: "Our forests will disappear. There will be no fish in our wat-



Burmese students near the Thai border: logging and fishing deals.

points — Muse and Panghsai — the authorities decided recently to allow cooperatives and private merchants to use 25% and 40% respectively of their export earnings to import Chinese merchandise in kyats at the black-market rate — which is about six times as high as the official rate of Kyats 6.5:US\$1. The condition, though, is that goods purchased in this way have to be resold to the MEIC for distribution inside the country.

Peking's policy on Burma — once directed towards all-out military and political support for the rebels along the border — today appears to be almost exclusively guided by economic considerations. Local sources assert that the Chinese are also still maintaining close ties with these rebel groups, mainly because they offer more liberal terms for the traders than the government.

As for Burma's third major neighbour, Thailand, its reaction and policy are probably the most confusing and difficult to ascertain.

ers." In the case of an elected government, it is plausible to assume that these contracts will be terminated.

The repatriation of Burmese students, which appears linked to the logging and fishing deals, has also upset many Burmese. In four townships in Rangoon — Lanmadaw, Hledan, Sanchaung and Kemmendine — posters have appeared urging the public to boycott Thai goods. Ethnic Karen rebels have threatened to disrupt cross-border trade in teak logs, on which they now levy taxes.

In the long run, it is difficult to judge which neighbouring country will be able to maintain the closest relations with resource-rich Burma — which seems to be the ultimate purpose of the differing approaches of India, China and Thailand.

The only thing that appears certain is that Burma's self-imposed isolation, from which Rangoon benefited for years, is over and that it will be difficult to restore in the face of new challenges, both internal and external. ■

BURMA IN 1988

There Came a Whirlwind

PRISA/BIA-5

Burma Watcher

The past year has been Burma's most turbulent and violent since 1962, the year General Ne Win seized power in a military coup and initiated one of the world's most isolated and economically disastrous regimes. In 1988, after 26 years of rule, Ne Win resigned his overt political posts but retained power behind the scenes, while the Burmese people endured political turbulence, economic disintegration, and brutal repression during a heady period of political hope for a better way of life.

The article on Burma in 1987 by John B. Haseman was entitled "Change in the Air?" In 1988 there came a whirlwind of violence as the Burmese people struggled toward an end to the discredited "Burmese way to socialism" and a transition to a more moderate form of democratic government. Normal political and economic developments were overshadowed by the series of violent periods that dominated the year.

The Politics of Anger

No one could have foreseen that the traumatic events of the year would start in a brawl between a small group of students and townspeople over the type of music played in a bar and cafe. But that is precisely what happened. A populace still stung by the demonetization of 80% of its currency in September 1987 was less tolerant of its government and more brazen in its response to petty repression. In March, an off-campus conflict that could have been settled by reasonable discussion escalated instead to major violence by the utter stupidity of the government's reaction. The death of a student at the hands of a ministerial bodyguard led to major

"Burma Watcher" is the pseudonym of a diplomat who is intimately familiar with developments in Burma. He is a specialist in political/military affairs in Southeast Asia, and has published a number of articles dealing with the region. The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not represent the official position of any government.

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student demonstrations at Rangoon's university campuses. Except for small disturbances following the demonetization, these were the first major antigovernment demonstrations since student protests at the burial arrangements for former U.N. Secretary-General U Thant in 1974.

The use of special riot police called Lon Htein, whose callous brutality stunned the general population, changed the conflict into a major protest by the ordinary people of Rangoon. Unofficial estimates of student deaths from beatings, bayonet stabbings, and suffocation were in the hundreds, but the government blandly announced a total of two student deaths. Government coverup attempts inflamed public opinion while thousands of students were arrested and carted off to prisons. Months later the government admitted the worst atrocity, the suffocation deaths of 41 students among over a hundred people crammed into a single police paddy wagon.

The demonstrations led to the closing of all universities in Burma until June, a move the government hoped would calm student fervor. However, people did not forget the violence of March. Rumors swirled through Rangoon about beatings and deaths at the hands of the Lon Htein, and about alleged rapes of women students imprisoned at Rangoon's notorious Insein Prison. There were demands for a full government accounting of the dead and missing.

Political activity was renewed and the second period of violence occurred in late June. It started as a peaceful march of students down a major road from Rangoon University. The same Lon Htein riot police attempted to break up the march by driving a truck into the front ranks of the demonstrators, killing or injuring several junior high school students. The enraged crowd turned on the police and beat eight of them to death on the spot. The Lon Htein fired into the crowds of demonstrators at several points, dispersing them and incurring even more hatred in the process. All schools in Burma, from elementary level through universities, were closed indefinitely and remain closed at this writing.

In the aftermath of the riots and under great pressure from an aroused populace, Chairman U Ne Win called extraordinary meetings of the ruling Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP) and the Pyitthu Hluttaw (national assembly) in late July. It was widely believed the sessions would result in some political concessions, including the expulsion from the BSPP of General Secretary Sein Lwin. Instead U Ne Win and President San Yu resigned their party and state posts, and in the ensuing power vacuum the BSPP appointed Sein Lwin, the most hated man in the country, as both the BSPP chairman and president of Burma. Incredibly, the man held responsible in the people's eyes for the brutality of March and June, as well as for the deaths of students in 1962 and 1974, became the

country's chief of state and party leader. Popular outrage was immediate and widespread. Demonstrations began in Rangoon and quickly spread to most other major cities in Burma. Initially led by students, the ranks of demonstrators quickly filled with people from all walks of life; by early August hundreds of thousands were marching through Rangoon and other cities demanding the resignation of Sein Lwin and an accounting of students missing after the March and June incidents. The demonstrators also carried signs calling for democracy and the removal of the one-party system run by the BSPP. Martial law was declared on August 3, and combat troops were brought directly from front line duty against Karen insurgents to patrol the streets of Rangoon.

The Politics of Violence

Throughout the turmoil of March and June the Burmese armed forces (Tatmadaw) had retained a popular image. Although present on the streets, military forces had been held in reserve and were not deployed against the demonstrators. Popular mythology reported instances of soldiers restraining the brutal Lon Htein in their clubbing of students, and the feeling was that the Tatmadaw supported the students in their confrontation with the police. Years of effective propaganda have portrayed the Tatmadaw as children of the nation, born of the people and defenders of the country. The standard image shows loyal sacrifice as soldiers leave their family and loved ones and depart for a life of hardship and danger on the front lines. Songs, movies, and books have been written furthering this image, and the effort had been a huge success. The people of Burma had been conditioned to think of their army as a force of strength, deployed on the country's frontiers to combat a wide array of insurgent movements that threatened the nation's security. Certainly the 80% of Burmese living in "metropolitan Burma," the historic center of Burman society along the great Irrawaddy, Chindwin, and Sittang rivers, had little chance to see the Tatmadaw in action.

Even as late as August 8th, five days after the declaration of martial law and the banning of gatherings and demonstrations, thousands of people marched through Rangoon. Student marchers were seen paying homage to the squads of soldiers deployed on every street corner, and the expanding demonstrations remained peaceful, without interference from the military. But sometime that day—the 8th—a decision was made at the highest level of government to use force against the marchers. After warning demonstrators in front of City Hall to disperse or be shot, the army opened fire. Dozens were shot and the violence was on. Uglier and uglier incidents multiplied throughout Rangoon. Troops, fully deployed all over

the city, fired on unarmed demonstrators at will, chased fleeing civilians and shot them, and fired indiscriminately into houses and at innocent people caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. In one of the worst incidents, soldiers followed a group of protesting nurses into the compound of Rangoon General Hospital, which had become a central gathering place for demonstrators, and opened fire, killing or wounding doctors, nurses, and bystanders. The soldiers returned later and again fired into the hospital. The government-controlled radio and television news lost all credibility by repeatedly broadcasting denials of this incident despite hundreds of eyewitnesses and verification by foreign diplomats.

The brutal repression lasted through August 12th. Though final figures will never be known, reliable diplomatic observers estimate that over a thousand people were killed and more than two thousand were wounded. On August 13th, Sein Lwin resigned and was replaced by Dr. Maung Maung, a civilian and close intimate of U Ne Win's inner circle. He was probably the most credible candidate available from the ruling echelon of the BSPP, and one of his first steps was to withdraw the army from the streets of Rangoon. For awhile at least, the killing stopped.

The Politics of Hope

With considerable justification, the Burmese people thought they had won a significant victory. Dr. Maung Maung announced that the planned referendum on whether or not to adopt a multiparty system would go forward. But the people were no longer listening. In the streets in increasing numbers, they insisted that a referendum had already taken place and that the millions of voices already had declared their decision. Well-organized demonstrations, with growing numbers of participants, took place daily, including in front of the United States embassy. Perhaps because of U.S. official and congressional denunciation of the regime's resort to lethal force against unarmed demonstrators, the people of Rangoon adopted the embassy as a gathering place and a destination for most demonstrations, the largest of which took place on August 23 and 24 with an estimated one million people participating.

Significantly, every other city and town of any size in Burma also supported huge demonstrations. Mandalay, the great center of Burmese culture, regularly turned out hundreds of thousands into the streets. Many towns swelled over their normal populations as rural farmers came to town to demonstrate for democracy. It was no longer a case of isolated and sophisticated Rangoon speaking out. What sounded was the voice of an entire nation.

To the aroused populace, the government response was seemingly to foment fears of a breakdown of law and order. Rumors flew like wildfire, with some justifiable verification, that the government was instigating robbery and unrest with squads of undesirables. The rumors were fed when simultaneous major riots occurred in many of the country's largest prisons. After fires and rioters damaged the prisons, tens of thousands of common criminals were released into this tinderbox of suspicion and violence. Suspected criminals suffered instant vigilante justice, including beheading. Severed heads and headless bodies appeared at suburban markets and downtown street corners. Anarchy loomed, and Rangoon turned into an armed vigilante camp. Every city block or neighborhood organized its own security committee, and bamboo fences eight feet high spread across every city block to keep out nonresidents and control access.

As a result, most government services came to a halt. Heeding opposition calls for a general strike, Burma's millions of civil servants stayed home. The economy, already in shambles, ground to a halt. Fuel became scarce as refineries closed. Domestic air service was halted, and by the end of August foreign airlines stopped regular service to Rangoon. Trains, intercity buses, and ferries also stopped running. The cost of local transportation soared with the cost of fuel, and food transport slowed to a trickle. Exports of rice and teak wood came to a halt and foreign exchange reserves plunged. Mobs sacked government factories and warehouses, and they occupied police stations and confiscated weapons found there.

In this atmosphere of fear and insecurity, most foreign embassies in Rangoon evacuated their dependents and some staff members as a precautionary measure. A dramatic evacuation flight of these dependents on September 11 signaled a major change in the external view of events in Burma. An ever more isolated government accused foreign news media of undue influence in Burmese internal affairs, a damning admission that a radio broadcast or news article outside of Burma carried more weight with the Burmese people than anything the government could churn out.

The Politics of Opposition

Political opposition has been prohibited in Burma for more than 26 years. Because of this, demonstrators were slow to organize and produce effective leaders. Three personalities gradually assumed importance as leaders of the opposition movement. Retired Brigadier General Aung Gyi was well known for writing a series of critical letters to BSPP Chairman U Ne Win between April and July. His letters recounted the history of the BSPP takeover of the country in 1962, criticized the government's handling of economic disintegration, and detailed human rights abuses by riot police

during the March demonstrations. Aung Gyi, imprisoned in the past for his disagreement with Ne Win's policy of nationalization of industries and property, was arrested by Sein Lwin and imprisoned for several weeks before being released by Dr. Maung Maung. Retired Major General Tin Oo retained considerable influence within the armed forces. He was forced from service and jailed in 1976, allegedly for failure to take action against coup plotting by junior officers. The third and most unlikely leader to emerge was Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of Burma's revered independence leader, General Aung San. Married to a British scholar and a long-time resident of England, she was fortuitously in Burma to attend to her seriously ill mother when the demonstrations broke out.

These three figures consolidated personal support at outdoor rallies attended by hundreds of thousands of followers, and they joined forces to form the major opposition political party. Former Prime Minister U Nu, ousted by Ne Win in his 1962 coup, formed a second major opposition party. Apparently out of touch with the realities of present-day Burma, U Nu at one point declared himself the legitimate prime minister and announced formation of a government without consulting many of those he "appointed" to office. U Nu retains much affection and respect in Burma, but the degree of his political influence cannot be readily discerned.

The Politics of Violent Repression

Much political activity and the heady feeling of freedom in the air vanished on September 18, when Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Saw Maung announced that the armed forces had taken over the government. The pseudo-coup placed the military, which has always been the real arm of power in Burma, in an unfamiliar, out-front political posture. The immediate effect of Saw Maung's seizure of political leadership was a renewed period of brutal military repression. Soldiers gunned down hundreds of unarmed demonstrators in the streets of Rangoon, including an ambush of unarmed civilians directly in front of the American embassy, a move probably designed to remove the air of sanctuary the environs had enjoyed.

The renewed violence, which persisted for several days, finally gained the attention of the outside world. Many foreign missions in Rangoon delivered formal protests to the military junta deploring and condemning the violence directed at unarmed demonstrators, and calling for reconciliation between the military and the political opposition. Burma's three major aid donors—Japan, West Germany, and the United States—suspended their assistance programs until genuine political reform is instituted.

The military leadership, taking its direction from Ne Win, quickly consolidated its position and ended the demonstrations. Thousands of dead and wounded jammed Rangoon hospitals and private clinics, and it was readily apparent that armed might had prevailed. Within days, the people's crude roadblocks and security fences had been dismantled and martial law succeeded in halting demonstrations. It took more than two weeks, however, to return civil servants to their ministries, and the damage imposed by mobs and two months of general strike took their toll on the government infrastructure as well as on many state-owned factories and other enterprises.

The Aftermath

A key part of General Saw Maung's proclamation upon seizing overt power was a pledge to respect the people's wishes for free elections once law and order had been restored to Burma. Laws for registration of political parties were quickly drawn up and more than 100 political parties had registered by early November. It remains to be seen how many of these parties plan to contest the elections. The date for elections has not been set, although a period in early 1989 has been commonly rumored. The Saw Maung government has not granted several key demands by the opposition in the area of election management, however. The election commission was appointed by the government without opposition representation. Curfews and restrictions on public gatherings prevent much public campaigning from taking place. However, General Saw Maung did direct the divestiture of all publicly owned assets from the BSPP, and all military and government personnel have been prohibited from membership in any political party.

Ironically, the Tatmadaw, which started the year as a respected component of Burmese society, reached year's end as a popularly hated organization. Its use as an indiscriminate dispenser of violent repression resulted in a forfeiture of the respect and affection it enjoyed both locally and abroad. The armed forces remains a highly disciplined organization, apparently totally loyal to Ne Win and the narrow interests his inner clique represents. Held in thrall for years by access to special privilege and sanctioned corruption, the Tatmadaw remains the most powerful sector of society in Burma and will, for the foreseeable future, retain an overwhelmingly powerful position within the country.

PRISA/BA-6

Protesters take to the streets in cautious numbers

On the march again

by Bertil Lintner in Bangkok

Anti-government street demonstrations have begun again in several Burmese cities — six months after the military takeover which crushed a massive popular movement against the regime and drove dissident students underground. This time, the protests are on a much smaller scale, underscoring fear of the military which reportedly killed thousands of people before and after Gen. Saw Maung's 18 September takeover.

The first demonstration was held on 13 March in Rangoon when students and opposition parties marked the first anniversary of the death of Maung Phone Maw, the first student who was gunned down by the military. Troops and armed police patrolled the streets during the demonstration but did not interfere.

Perhaps encouraged, the students organised a second protest three days later, on the first anniversary of the clubbing of youths by riot police on the shores of Inya Lake. This time, troops prevented more than 1,000 demonstrators from floating wreaths in the lake by threatening to open fire if they did not disperse.

The following day, more protests broke out at Rangoon University and outside Hleikhan police station, where a number of students had been detained. Burmese sources say several thousand people gathered outside the police station, indicating that tension once again rising.

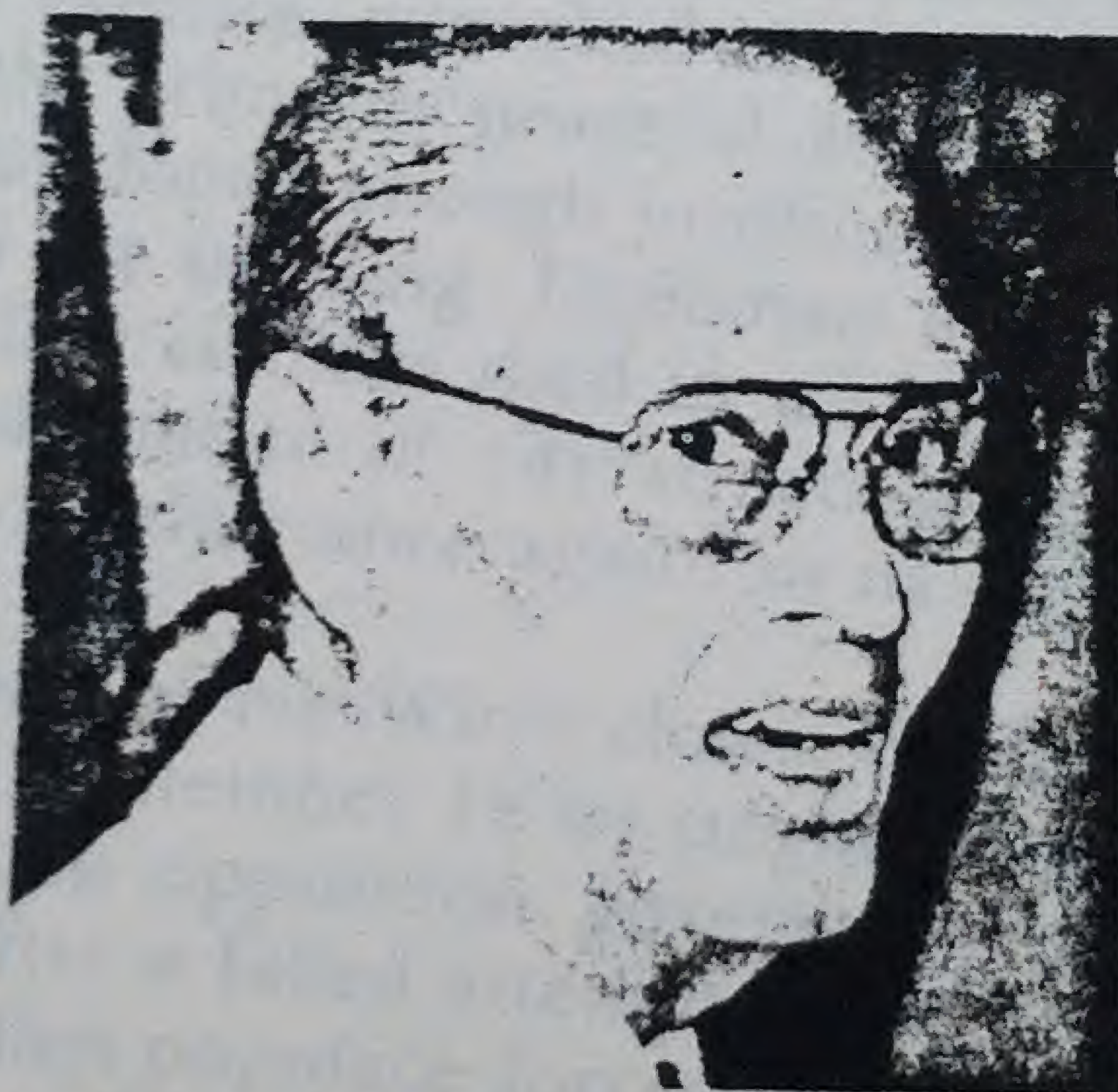
"The people are getting impatient, especially the students," a Burmese source in Rangoon said. "All universities have been closed since last June — and all schools, including primary schools, since August. Despite promises of a general election, the recession is worse than ever and prices of most daily necessities are rising steadily."

Since mid-March, armoured cars and lorries mounted with Swedish-made Bofors cannon have been cruising the streets of Rangoon. The authorities, afraid that the 27 March Armed Forces Day parade would bring out the protesters en masse again, conducted house-to-house searches along the route before the parade and arrested prominent student leaders Min Ko Naing and Ko Gyi, along with 13 others. And just to make sure of support, the authorities ordered civil servants to turn out and present flowers to the troops during the parade.

The mass demonstration never materialised, but students managed to gather in small groups, chanting slogans and

melting away just before troops arrived. However, upcountry street protests appear to have been much bigger. According to Burmese sources, 3-4,000 people marched through Mandalay, Burma's second city, on 27 March, singing pro-democracy songs and chanting anti-government slogans while thousands of bystanders cheered them on and presented them with flowers and water.

Fear of the military is keeping demonstrations relatively muted, but though a new election law has been drafted and the disastrous 26-year-old Burmese Way to Socialism — the regime's guiding national principle since the military coup in 1962 — abandoned, few Burmese seem to believe that anything has really changed in the top leadership of the country. Indeed, Ne Win, the strongman who supposedly retired on 23 July 1988, reappeared at a dinner party for foreign envoys on Armed Forces Day, effec-

**Ne Win; Sein Lwin: power structure intact.**

tively laying to rest all speculation that he was now out of the picture.

Well-placed sources also claim that Ne Win's successor, Sein Lwin, who resigned on 12 August 1988 after only 18 days in power, still belongs to the inner circle of decision-makers. Another of Ne Win's close associates, Maung Maung, who took over from Sein Lwin and was removed by the military on 18 September, is reportedly the main author of Burma's new election law (REVIEW, 23 Mar.). Given that Saw Maung himself has been a close follower of both Ne Win and Sein Lwin, there seems no doubt that the previous power structure remains intact.

Even if the promised elections were to be held, there is no indication that the military would relinquish power. When it took over last year, Burma's foreign-exchange reserves

were estimated at a mere US\$8 million. Since then, the military regime has sold off lucrative logging and fishing rights to Thai, Malaysian, Singaporean, South Korean and Hongkong companies, for a figure estimated at tens of millions of dollars. The sale of a gems and jade emporium in Rangoon in March gave the military an additional US\$5.4 million, official figures indicate.

Diplomatic sources say the money raised has been ear-marked for buying more arms and ammunition in case there is another popular uprising and will not be used for development projects or to pay off the country's US\$4 billion foreign debt. Significantly, the state-run *Working People's Daily* newspaper on 7 March gave prominence to an agency report from Venezuela saying that its president had suspended payments on its foreign debt and quoting him as linking his country's "worst unrest in 31 years of democratic rule to the burden of foreign debt."

The lack of public confidence in the regime is causing an exodus from Burma of mostly young, well-educated people who see no prospect of a meaningful change. Every week, 200-300 people leave the country either by air or as seamen working on Burmese and foreign ships. "In the past, it used to be difficult to get a passport. Now, it's a



mere formality. We want to leave and they want to get rid of us," a Burmese, who said he was in last year's demonstrations, told the REVIEW on his arrival in Bangkok.

The easing of passport regulations seems to serve as a social safety valve, but the brain-drain will undoubtedly make it even more difficult to rebuild Burma's shattered economy, analysts say.

Even the renewed protests in Rangoon and Mandalay could weaken the opposition, some observers suggest. They believe the opposition movement could split, with the more militant students believing that only a violent uprising can overthrow the regime and some of the more moderate opposition politicians are arguing that the demonstrations are counter-productive because they give the army an excuse not to hold elections and thus retain power.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS
SPRING 1989

PRISA/BA - 7

Maureen Aung-Thwin

BURMESE DAYS

Burma's brief bid for democracy appears to have subsided as abruptly as it began. While it lasted, for a few hot weeks in August and September 1988, the world caught a glimpse of the deep cleavages rending this remarkably long-suffering Buddhist society, driven to revolt against a military dictatorship controlled by General Ne Win, who originally took power in 1962 in the name of national unity.

The country had never seen anything like the summer of 1988: hundreds of thousands of ocher-robed monks, young children, university students, housewives, doctors—even some police and civil servants—took to the streets of Burma's major cities in an unprecedented public display of disgust. Alarmed, Burma's defense force, the Tatmadaw, threw out a few carrots of promised reforms. But the concessions were too little, too late, serving only to harden the marchers' determination.

Sporadic looting and violence, provoked in many instances by the military, tinged the primarily peaceful demonstrations. Eventually, the Tatmadaw found enough justification to crack down and forcibly quell the uprising. Diplomats in Rangoon estimate that at least 1,000 civilians died in mid-September, when the army resumed control of city streets by gunning down unarmed protestors—thus once again, in its own view, saving the union.

General Saw Maung, one of Ne Win's closest disciples, restored Tatmadaw rule on September 18 by staging a nominal coup d'état, not against an opposition government but to reassert the army's rule after a failed attempt to refurbish its civilian facade. For the sullen populace forced to acquiesce in the face of guns, it meant martial law with a nightly curfew, closure of all schools and universities, and prohibition of assembly by more than five persons.

This crackdown prompted around 7,000 student dissidents,

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along with some monks and laborers, to flee and take refuge with antigovernment insurgent groups in bases mainly located along the country's malarious jungle border with Thailand. About half of the dissidents have since returned home, some voluntarily, others pressured by intense lobbying and possible coercion by the Burmese and Thai governments. Reports of torture and killings of some of the returnees are difficult to confirm, but political repression is hardly new to Burma. For over 26 years this hapless land has endured a government exercising tight control over everything from the press to the ability of Burmese citizens to travel abroad.

Last summer's initially euphoric—and ultimately violent—uprising against Burma's authoritarian regime was long overdue. Yet it is still too early to predict what fruit the short-lived "democracy movement" will bear.

For as long as he lives, Ne Win, 78, a superstitious and short-tempered ruler who relies both on astrologers and the intense loyalty of subordinates, is likely to control Burmese political developments, no matter who is titularly at the helm of government. In the chaos of last year's uprising, Burma ran through three successive leaders in as many months, but it was Ne Win who dominated events. The general's call for economic and political reform and his unexpected resignation as chairman of Burma's sole party helped fuel the protests. And his threat that the army would "shoot to kill" those disobeying its commands was carried out to bring a newly vociferous populace almost instantly to heel. It is difficult to say how many changes in the system—or bullets—will be necessary to keep people from returning to the streets. That the Tatmadaw will remain in power for the foreseeable future, however, is much easier to predict, for radical students and other opposition groups are no match for the soldiers' monopoly on information and arms.

II

Since the end of British colonial rule in Burma 41 years ago, the country has been lost in a time warp, wrestling with its domestic demons while much of the rest of Asia found its stride in a rapidly modernizing and interdependent world. With Japan leading the way, some of Burma's neighbors have become what has been called "the most successful collection of devel-

oping countries ever known."¹ Despite all the anguish expended over Vietnam, Asia's dominoes now seem to be tumbling America's way. China, the communist giant, has rediscovered supply and demand. Formerly authoritarian regimes in the Philippines, South Korea and Pakistan have been replaced by democratically elected governments. Burma is one of the rare exceptions: as even one Asia-watching Soviet official has remarked, "It is impossible in the world today to have progress without democracy, so why deny it to Burma?"

An understanding of why such widely accepted notions of development have eluded Burma so far, and may endure for the near future, requires examination of the complex set of unresolved attitudes toward historical events and cultural circumstances that remain embedded in the nation's collective psyche. Over two decades ago a prescient student of Burmese society suggested that if Burma, with its embarrassment of natural riches, relatively sparse population and plentiful land could not develop a viable modern economic, political and social structure, it would be due to "a failure of human effort, a matter of social and cultural variables, a case of organizational and ideological inadequacy."²

Burma, nearly as large as Texas, possesses a geographic location, natural resources and an enviably low ratio of population to arable land unmatched in Southeast Asia. The diamond-shaped nation stretches for a thousand miles from the Himalayan peaks along the border with eastern Tibet in the north to the lush tropical swamps of Tenasserim state in the south. Burma's 1,400-mile coastline boasts 86,000 square miles of continental shelf, where fisheries could annually yield an estimated 600,000 tons. Kipling's famous "Road to Mandalay," the Irrawaddy River, is only the longest of many navigable rivers that crisscross the country for some 5,000 miles. Burma's population is almost as diverse as its geography, with roughly two-thirds belonging to the dominant Burmese-speaking Burman ethnic group and the remaining one-third comprising a dozen or so minority groups which among them speak nearly a hundred languages.

The culture of the Burmans, who entered central Burma


¹ *The Economist*, Dec. 24, 1988, p. 31. In the 1950s Burma, Thailand and S. Korea had similarly low GNPs; by the late 1980s, Burma's GNP per capita was \$200, Thailand's \$800, and South Korea's \$3,000.

² Manning Nash, *The Golden Road to Modernity: Village Life in Contemporary Burma*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1965, p. 1.

before the ninth century, contains elements of the ancient Pyu civilization they absorbed and the sophisticated Buddhist culture of the Mon kingdom they conquered. Burman kings ruled for approximately one thousand years, a period marked by cycles of power-dispersal and consolidation under various *min laung*, or charismatic savior-kings, who built royal temples and forged symbolic links with heroes of past dynasties to legitimize their rule. The Burman monarch did not even attempt to provide the country's highly autonomous minority groups with direct leadership. These groups—which ranged from the Shans in the eastern hills, with their Buddhist culture and system of tribal chieftains, to the animistic Karens, to the head-hunting Naga tribesmen along India's border—lived for the most part outside a horseshoe-shaped range of mountains that encircles the plains of central Burma, where the Burmans settled. This natural buffer enabled the ethnic groups to continue their traditional ways while acknowledging Burman suzerainty.

Britain's abolition of the Burmese monarchy in 1885 exacerbated latent tensions between the Burmans and the minority groups, which increased with the advent of Burman-led nationalism. The Christian colonials also displaced the Buddhist hierarchy, encouraging Burman nationalists to equate Buddhism—and, later, socialist ideas—with nationalism, and Christianity with colonialism and capitalism. Since the 1930s Buddhism, socialism and nationalism have been intertwined, with Marxist concepts easily translated into Buddhist terms.

In 1947, following the bitter colonial experience and the devastation of World War II, Aung San, the charismatic young Burman independence leader who is considered the father of modern Burma, convinced all but one of the major ethnic groups to sign the historic Panglong Agreement, by which they promised to join a union with the majority Burmans.



The new nation, however, was instantly convulsed by a baptism of fire that logically should have destroyed it. A series of traumas that befell Burma between 1947 and into 1949 continue to haunt the nation: the assassination in 1947 of Aung San, who was expected to be Burma's first head of state; the launching of Southeast Asia's longest running Marxist insurgency by the Burmese communists, who had been the political mentors of Burma's pre-independence nationalist movement; and the beginning of armed rebellions by factions of Karen and Mon ethnic groups, who lacked faith in the autonomy guaranteed in Burma's first constitution of 1947.

Although Burma remained a parliamentary democracy for a decade, and though the first constitution was written to allow some groups to consider secession after a period of ten years, communist and ethnic insurgencies continually threatened national unity. Factionalism within the governing Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League forced Prime Minister U Nu to resign in 1958 in favor of a caretaker regime headed by Ne Win, Aung San's former military subordinate and commander in chief of the armed forces. Although U Nu was reelected to the prime minister's office in 1960, political division soon recurred. Ne Win, assuming the symbolic role of one of Burma's savior-kings, finally ended civilian government with a virtually bloodless coup on March 2, 1962, under the pretext that an impending federal conference on secession might break up the union.

From its origins as an anti-British nationalist army, described by one scholar as a "political movement in military garb,"³ the Tatmadaw had come to regard itself as both the embodiment and protector of national unity. Ne Win, through his long domination of the Tatmadaw, gradually became synonymous with it, garnering more fearful respect and charismatic power, known in Burma as *awza*, than any of his rivals.

After four decades of nationhood the cold fact is that the central government is still engaged to varying degrees in protracted civil wars with elements of some dozen assorted ethnic groups, which only in the past few years have seriously begun to consolidate their efforts. Informed sources say that Burma in recent years has been spending at least 50 percent of its limited budget, twice the official figure, for defense, mostly for "internal security"—which means fighting the Burmese communists and the various ethnic insurgencies. (Burma has not had an external threat since an anticipated invasion in the early 1950s by the newly established People's Republic of China.)

Today the Burmese Communist Party (BCP), numbering an estimated 10,000 adherents at most,⁴ is a shadow of its former self, a fractious and fairly unthreatening group of aging ideologues plagued by recruiting and budgetary headaches that have driven them to dealing in drugs with such implausible

³ Dorothy Guyot, "The Burma Independence Army: A Political Movement in Military Garb," in Josef Silverstein (ed.), *Southeast Asia in World War II*, New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Program Monograph Series, 1967, p. 51.

⁴ Charles Smith, *1989 Yearbook on International Communist Affairs*, Stanford (Calif.): Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University, forthcoming.

allies as the remnants of the Chinese nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) troops still roaming the Burmese hillsides.

Recently the BCP has participated in another unlikely alliance, this with the National Democratic Front. The NDF, formed in 1986, is composed of ten major anticommunist ethnic groups (including Karens, Kachins, Shans and Mons) in opposition to the Burmese central government. The most potent of these groups, the 8,000-member Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and Army (KIA), is led by Brang Seng, an articulate and politically savvy former principal of a Christian school in the northern town of Myikyina. Waging separate wars against the central government had kept these ethnic groups isolated from one another, and more significantly from the Burman majority that has been led by the Ne Win regime to regard the rebellious groups as terrorist insurgents instead of ethnic nationalists desiring a genuine federal union.

III

The events of last summer in the cities of Burma reveal the failure of the Ne Win-led Tatmadaw to meet basic human needs by means of a socialism that would not compromise the country's traditional values. "The Burmese Way to Socialism," which could be considered an ideological symbol of unity, succeeded only in transforming a country that once was the world's top exporter of rice (and still contains 80 percent of global teak reserves, among other riches) into a "least developed country," alongside Bangladesh and Chad.

"The Burmese Way to Socialism" is the title of an unassuming seven-page pamphlet that outlines a quasi-Marxist, semi-Buddhistic means of liberating man from social evils caused by "pernicious economic systems in which man exploits man." But the document is less a dogma than an attempt to rationalize Tatmadaw rule within a Burmese context.

The impact on the average Burmese citizen of the army's monopoly of political power and its centralized economic planning depends on where he lives. Although the limited rural participation in last year's uprising does not necessarily reflect the lack of a countrywide consensus for reform, the "democracy movement" was primarily an urban phenomenon, for the city dweller has borne the full brunt of Ne Win's mismanagement.

In a sense, Burmese society probably has coped better than many peoples whose governments practice a purer Marxist

socialism. Burma sometimes only seems to be at odds with itself because the nation is impossible to describe accurately in quantitative terms. Even its estimated population of 38 million is a guess based on the last complete countrywide census in 1931 and the more recent head counts of 1973 and 1983, which of course excluded members of minority groups still in rebellion against the central government.

According to the World Bank, Burma's official income per capita today is supposedly around \$200; the growth rate of the country's gross domestic product averaged a commendable 6.4 percent in 1977-82, then dropped to one percent in 1986-87 and turned negative in 1988. But statistics, especially Burmese government figures, only reflect the ever-shrinking portion of the economy that is measurable. They are misleading indicators of a country that cannot be captured on paper, as Burton Levin, U.S. ambassador to Burma, discovered soon after his arrival in Rangoon in 1987:

There is a huge black market out there which is not reflected in statistics, and as bad as things were, the level of the standard of living that I encountered was higher than that when I first went to Taiwan in 1954, higher than I encountered when I went to Indonesia from 1960 to 1963, and certainly higher than one frequently still encounters in China and Pakistan. In other words, the endemic malnutrition, the matchstick limbs, the swollen bellies, the people in rags—they just weren't there.

Burma's unofficial trade may cover as much as 80 percent of the economy. The shadow economy (which Burmese jokingly refer to as "State Corporation Number One," or as the most successful of the official "SEEs," or State Economic Enterprises) acts as a safety valve for what would otherwise be an intolerable situation. This huge free market within socialist Burma, which provides consumers with everything from Chinese tricycles to UNICEF-donated pharmaceuticals from Bangladesh, helped check the people's desperation.

Rice, the staple food in Burma, as elsewhere in Asia, has a significance within the society extending beyond mere economics: a typical greeting used by Burmese of all income levels and ages is a simple, "Have you eaten your rice yet?" Farmers and residents of the countryside who grow their own food, 85 percent of the population, have been more protected than those who depend on an urban cash economy from the ravages of Burmese socialism. After all, the government in Rangoon

could not force farmers to do much except sell it annual quotas of rice at less than market prices.

Nevertheless, farmers also had longstanding complaints against the Ne Win regime. Even the U Nu government, with a large number of foreign advisers, had allocated a disproportionately small amount of the national budget to agriculture, although its post-World War II recovery lagged dangerously behind other less crucial sectors of the economy. In the early 1950s Burma controlled 28 percent of the world rice trade; by 1970, a measly two percent.⁵ Under Ne Win, the industrial sector continued to receive most development attention; a temporary shift in development priorities during the early 1970s from heavy industry to agriculture was only partially successful.

The most profitable commodity exported from Burma, of course, is opium. The central government can never hope to regulate the illegal drug trade because opium poppies are grown in remote territory controlled by the Burmese Communist Party, and to a lesser extent by Shan and Wa ethnic rebels. A bumper opium crop of around 1,300 tons was projected for 1989, even before the United States suspended payment of \$12 million in bilateral aid to Burma, most of it for eradicating opium crops by aerial spraying of chemicals.

IV

Given the longstanding instability of Burma's domestic situation, why did the uprising of 1988 not occur sooner? Any answer must be tentative, given the highly speculative nature of Burma-watching, made no simpler by Burma's isolation, the secretive nature of Ne Win and the Tatmadaw, and the resulting uncheckable rumors that must serve as a leading source of information about the country.

Last summer's crisis began with a sudden rise in expectations. After years during which agricultural development was neglected as a government objective, Ne Win announced on September 1, 1987, a sweeping decontrol of the production and trading of rice and basic foodstuffs. In a nation where at least 80 percent of the economy is agricultural, the decontrol was extremely welcome news, not only for farmers—who in any case usually found ways to circumvent official quotas and

⁵ David I. Steinberg, *Burma's Road to Development: Growth and Ideology under Military Rule*, Boulder (Colo): Westview Press, 1981, p. 110.

prices—but also for the remainder of the populace, urban consumers mostly, with little leverage in the straitjacketed economy.

Announcements by Ne Win, considered by many Burmese to possess a powerful aura, carry inordinate weight. The enigmatic Ne Win, whose name means “bright sun,” has eschewed a personality cult and arduously shuns publicity. But Ne Win, known as “Number One” to most Burmese, enjoys a mystique that one American diplomat in Rangoon describes as reminiscent of an ancient Chinese emperor—he has even, in the tradition of Burmese kings, built a pagoda to commemorate his reign. No one dares second-guess the mercurial general, resulting in a bureaucracy brimming with impotent sycophants. Ne Win’s virtual invisibility has also served to deflect direct blame for the country’s ills, sometimes causing even his harshest critics to ponder wistfully, “if only Number One knew . . .”

Whatever Number One knew, he failed to anticipate the uproar over his second surprise pronouncement: days after raising everyone’s expectations for agricultural reform, Ne Win declared valueless 80 percent of the kyats (the Burmese currency) in circulation. Any note over \$1.60 in value became instantly worthless. This was his regime’s third demonetization and the first without the promise of some compensation. Undertaken ostensibly to combat inflationary pressures, demonetization was also justified as a measure to undermine black marketeers (including, practically speaking, the entire population). The rash action caught students right in the middle of their final exams at Rangoon University and propelled them protesting into the streets. In a flash the students’ meager savings had disappeared; their money for everything from lunch to passage home was gone.

Education is highly regarded in Burma, even though there are virtually no jobs for university graduates once they leave school. Ironically, Burma’s high literacy rate—85 percent in the cities—nearly cost it the least-developed-country status the government sought, with great secrecy and humiliation, to help in servicing the nation’s debt.

Under the Ne Win regime, student activism had been sporadic. The last big rebellion against authority was in 1974, when it appeared that former United Nations Secretary-General U Thant would be given a funeral the young people considered inappropriate to his world status. The students knew U Thant only by his global reputation, for he had not

been a part of Burmese domestic politics and had lived abroad for decades. But U Thant symbolized a freer era and, as a former teacher, was a natural rallying point for the frustrated youngsters.

The long-smoldering campus tinderbox, close to explosion after years of political repression and aggravated by the economic policy shock in September 1987, was fully ignited the following March by a seemingly innocuous "town-gown" clash. In a tea shop near the Rangoon Institute of Technology, students and locals quarreled and finally came to blows over the choice of music tapes being played. The police were summoned to break up the brawl, and their actions resulted in the death of a student. Thousands of his schoolmates later returned to the scene and fought the hated *lon-htein*, or security police, who retaliated with weapons and tear gas. The impact of the incident spread city-wide when it became known that 41 young men and women suffocated to death after being arrested and crammed for hours in an overpacked police van, and reports circulated that some young women rioters had been raped.

In a rare display of public accountability—perhaps because the local police, not the army, had overreacted—the Tatmadaw announced an investigation into the incident. The sensitive atmosphere was further charged by reports that children of senior military officers had been among the protesters.

Enter ex-Brigadier General Aung Gyi, 70, formerly Ne Win's comrade and heir apparent, who had been running an empire of popular coffee shops since his ouster from power in 1963 by the army's more radical left-wingers. Most probably with Ne Win's knowledge, Aung Gyi wrote and distributed "open" letters to his former colleagues—the first public criticism of government policies in a quarter-century by a leading figure other than Ne Win. The letters, one almost 50 pages, were extraordinary for their candor and derision of a system that had turned Burma, "once so outstanding and rich," into a "beggar." Never directly critical of Ne Win, Aung Gyi wrote that "we cannot cover up our failures and weaknesses, our inability to achieve quality standards, and our lack of skills, and ignorance of world trade practices. Progress cannot be made through arrogance and falsification of accounts." Change must come, he pleaded: "There is no precedence in the world where continued authority is given to those who fail in their jobs."⁶

⁶ Aung Gyi, letter to his former military comrades, May 9, 1988.

Surprisingly, Aung Gyi was not thrown into jail until much later, and then only briefly.

On July 23, Ne Win, seeking to deflect popular wrath from the army, took personal responsibility for the student deaths the previous March, though he had been in Europe at the time. At an Extraordinary Party Congress of the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP), the political arm of the Tatmadaw, Ne Win submitted his resignation as party chairman, along with those of four close associates. He further astonished everyone by advocating a popular referendum for a multiparty system, implicitly admitting the failure of the Burmese socialist experiment while time remained to try a new course that might assure him a positive place in Burmese history.

Whether the BSPP's decision to reject the referendum while accepting the resignations meant that Ne Win temporarily had lost control of the party, or whether the BSPP reacted as Ne Win expected (and thus reconfirmed his authority), is open to interpretation. Either by twist of fate or sleight of hand—only Ne Win's closest associates know which—the man who took over the regime was Sein Lwin, head of the hated security police who had mismanaged the March incident. Sein Lwin, "the Butcher," as he is often called, had also been involved in breaking up earlier student riots—in 1962, when the Rangoon University student union building was dynamited, and again in 1974.

Sheer outrage at the ascension of Sein Lwin, once Ne Win's military "batman,"⁷ galvanized the previously improvised crowds of protestors into a formidable potential challenge to military rule—nearly half a million thronged one demonstration in August. Soldiers patrolling the cities had until this time refrained from violence, occasionally even fraternizing with protestors. During Sein Lwin's short reign, however, the army stunned the nation by firing into the crowds. Then, inexplicably, on August 10 soldiers shot at a group of nurses and doctors outside Rangoon General Hospital, killing five of them and triggering an immense backlash of anger. On August 12, after only 17 days in power, Sein Lwin was hurriedly replaced by Ne Win's biographer, Dr. Maung Maung, a civilian and West-

⁷ The "batman," a combination of orderly and protégé, is an institution drawn from the British. In the Burmese military, being a batman is a traditional means for rising through the ranks of an ambitious officer.

ern-educated lawyer who appeared to have substantial sympathy with the protestors' demands. But it was too late.

In an atmosphere of growing anarchy, sparked by isolated incidents of atrocities committed by both sides, the protestors were joined by some police, air force and navy personnel; although from the least important branches of the Tatmadaw, those defections served to awaken the proud armed forces to their desperate position. Finally, the soldiers were tremendously humiliated when the protestors almost succeeded in storming the Ministry of National Defense and the Ministry of Trade in what would surely have been a bloodbath for the small number of troops guarding the premises.

That set off the September 18 coup that allowed the Tatmadaw to once again "rescue" the nation from disintegration. Chief of Staff General Saw Maung, seeing the Tatmadaw lose control of the situation, ended the protests by turning sheer firepower against the unarmed population. He later told *Asiaweek*: "If we had waited for two more days, we would be in big trouble. [The opposition] had worked out who would take which portfolio or responsibility . . . I believe that I saved the country from an abyss."⁸

Despite Saw Maung's fears, the political opposition in Burma was not a threat to the Tatmadaw during last summer's upheaval. After the triumph of "people power" in the Philippines and the ballot in South Korea, the world watched with disappointment the sudden and violent quelling of Burma's spontaneous and short-lived "democracy movement." The Burmese students lacked organization and were unable to produce a leader who could harness the powerful momentum of the demonstrations. The most prominent symbol of defiance was the portrait of independence leader Aung San, martyred before most of the marchers were born. The leading dissidents who spoke at rallies between July and September, calling for an interim government to replace the military, included 82-year-old U Nu, two former military colleagues of Ne Win and the Britain-based daughter of Aung San—none of them, at the time at least, capable of facing down the Tatmadaw.

V

No one believes for a moment that Saw Maung is not acting in concert with Ne Win, who now more than ever must draw

⁸ *Asiaweek*, Jan. 27, 1989, p. 25.

on his considerable Machiavellian talents to save his country—and his beloved Tatmadaw.

Traditional Burmese concepts of authority, which are directed toward individuals rather than institutions, plus strongly held belief in the Buddhist notion of karma, help explain the stoic acceptance by the people of their lot. The lack of a genuine charismatic military alternative to Ne Win may also explain the "wait-and-see" attitude of the potential source of a future, more significant, coup: the second generation of military men, especially those at the divisional commander level. Better educated than the aging current leaders, the younger members of the Tatmadaw are not paralyzed by perceived obligations to the memory of the independence struggle or to Ne Win's patronage. How much power these younger military officers are willing to relinquish, and whether they would entertain the idea of a genuine multiparty system, is questionable; possibly they are split among themselves, never before having exercised direct authority over their country or shared power.

Whispers of dynastic ambitions already surround second-generation Brigadier General Khin Nyunt, first secretary of the State Law and Order Restoration Council and head of the ubiquitous Military Intelligence Services. Khin Nyunt, 51, was a colonel only last August and is closely connected to Sanda Win, Ne Win's daughter and confidante.

Regardless of Ne Win's fate, the Burmese military will continue to have a say in the country's political development for the foreseeable future. No one doubts that the 190,000-member Tatmadaw, the only credibly unified force in the country, must be the basis for a viable solution to the present political and economic impasse.

The Tatmadaw, ironically, has given the biggest boost in three decades to Burma's democratic process, simply by promising an election (currently scheduled for the spring of 1990) and allowing political parties to register over the past half-year. While it is not certain an election will actually occur, especially a free and fair one, no fewer than 233 political parties—many of them probably fronting for the officially disbanded BSPP—registered to contest the elections.

After a quarter-century of military dictatorship, Burmese from all walks of life—pensioners, peasants, members of ethnic groups, artists, even those too young to know anything but military rule—are banding together to articulate their private visions of democracy as they compose the goals of their new

parties. Many of these new groupings, with wonderfully evocative names like "League for Mother Democracy," "New Ideology Improvement Party," and "Esprit de Corps Restoration Party," are insisting on a democratic and representative system of government. No one mentions a return to socialism—though many are using the opportunity to push more parochial objectives, such as "to develop astrological science and indigenous medicine," or "to make good use of the experiences and knowledge of retired personnel and pensioners," and even the seemingly self-contradictory "to provide religious freedom and to seek advice of the senior abbots . . . regarding the propagation of the Buddhist religion."⁹

By all accounts, the most formidable challenge to the Tatmadaw is the National League for Democracy party, headed, in an eerie twist, by the daughter of the military's own patron saint, Aung San. Blessed with relative youth, charisma and ambition, Aung San Suu Kyi, 43, who was two years old when her father was assassinated, has spent her adult life abroad, mostly in England where she married a British scholar. A visit to her dying mother in Rangoon last year coincided with the beginnings of the "democracy period" in Burma. Burmese history dictates the rise of a charismatic leader in times of crises, but it is difficult to predict whether the necessary political accommodation could be reached between the present or future leadership of the Tatmadaw and its mentor's daughter.

VI

The Saw Maung regime is hoping with time to establish legitimacy in the eyes of an outside world that is notoriously short on memory and long on political expediency. Sighs one Burmese journalist, who requested anonymity, "How long can the world stand on its principles?"

Burma's major international donors—the United States, West Germany and Japan—have, as an expression of their moral indignation, suspended foreign bilateral assistance totaling \$400 million, most of it Japanese. This situation will be somewhat eased, however, by Japan's decision, announced in February 1989, to recognize the Saw Maung regime. Although it insisted that no new economic cooperation with Burma would take place until "the stability of the people's livelihood" is

⁹ *Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Report (FBIS-East Asia)*, December-January, 1988-89.

assured, Tokyo also decided to resume aid already in the pipeline, probably pressured by the private Japanese corporations involved in construction projects.

Burma's external debt is nearly \$5 billion, negligible perhaps compared in aggregate to Brazil's, but indicating a dangerously high debt-service ratio of at least 80 percent, perhaps higher. Moreover, the public sector and official economy suffer from a kyat that is grossly overvalued (by as much as 500 percent).

Burma's big debt will no doubt reinforce its traditional fear of foreigners. Largely as a reaction to colonial rule, when much of its economy was in the hands of foreigners, Burma equates the outside world with exploitation, and foreign economic systems as antithetical to nationalism and self-reliance. Negative attitudes persist toward ethnic Indians and Chinese, both of which groups are still active in the economy. Such antipathy was forged in the days when Rangoon was an overseas Indian city, controlled by moneylenders and traders from the subcontinent whose influence extended well into the rural sector. (Anti-Chinese riots came much later, in the 1960s, at the time of the Cultural Revolution.) These racial tensions endure despite the fact that many prominent citizens are "tainted" with foreign blood—for example Ne Win, born Shu Maung, who is thought to be part Chinese.

Burma seems to be willing to let one foreign nation act as mentor on the slow road to modernity—Japan, which has a unique opportunity to use its enormous economic clout to encourage political and economic reform in a country that has devoured billions of yen with little accountability. Coincidentally, last spring, before the uprising began, Japan had just advised visiting Burmese government officials to start reassessing their economic policies. Japan's relationship with Burma is complex, however, partly emotional and not entirely yen-based. Both countries seem to cherish memories of the Japanese-sponsored training of Burma's early nationalist group, the legendary "Thirty Comrades" who included both Aung San and Ne Win. Although the Japanese were largely responsible for the devastation of Burma during World War II—in Asia, the severity of the wartime destruction in Burma was perhaps second only to that which occurred in Japan itself—the Burmese have not displayed toward their former enemies the ambivalence that they harbor toward the West and Western culture. Only a few years ago Burma received the single biggest

share of Japanese technical foreign aid, indicating the special concern of the Japanese.

What of the other major donors, West Germany and the United States? Many of the pro-democracy demonstrations in Rangoon were held in front of the U.S. embassy, though this probably reflected more concern for personal safety and enhanced international publicity than a larger political significance. Nevertheless, the United States doubtlessly symbolized the protesters' inchoate demands for democratic change. Says U.S. Ambassador Levin, "When you get crowds in front of an American embassy, you don't think of people necessarily having positive feelings, let me assure you. This time the United States was the first government to come out publicly and deplore the shooting incident in front of the hospital. We were on the record, we were first, we were strong on the subject."

The apparent pro-Western sentiment was reinforced by daily broadcasts in Burmese by the Voice of America, which, along with the British Broadcasting Corporation, kept the Burmese nation abreast of developments. (The usually state-controlled Burmese press was unbridled for only about a month during the summer.) Unfortunately, much of the reportage was broadcast from outside Burma; if international television, radio and print reporters could have chronicled the uprisings from within Burma, as happened in the Philippines, things might conceivably have taken a different course.

The U.S. government, however, has not had to formulate a real Burma policy for many years, since its substantive interest in the nation peaked in the 1950s. World War II turned northern Burma into an experimental training ground for the anti-Japanese espionage teams of Wild Bill Donovan's nascent Force 101. Its parent institution, the Office of Strategic Services, returned a decade later as the Central Intelligence Agency to help the KMT's doomed efforts to rid mainland China of the Communists, though Burma was the first neutral country to recognize the People's Republic.

Under Ne Win, Burma has pursued a strict (and probably farsighted) policy of nonalignment in foreign affairs. In 1979 Burma, true to its own principles, quit the Non-Aligned Movement because it perceived a Soviet tilt. This won the country many admirers, among them the United States. Strict neutralism also kept Burma out of the Vietnam conflict and may explain the country's reluctance to join the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

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With no military bases, business investments and limited political interests in Burma, the United States is in a rare position to exercise what an American diplomat in Rangoon calls "the luxury of living up to our principles." Promoting democracy is certainly easier than dealing with Washington's only other concern regarding Burma: its illicit narcotics exports, which will reach a record high this year.

Still, U.S. policy in Burma should not be dictated by drugs. Although Burma is the world's largest supplier of opium, most of the poppies are grown in areas not controlled by the central government by poor farmers who might, given adequate incentives, substitute alternative cash crops. It is useless, therefore, to attempt even a temporary solution to the opium-heroin network without trying to help bring about a lasting political settlement between the Burmese central government and the rebel groups that control the poppy crop.

Moreover, the United States must keep up the pressure on Thailand to monitor more effectively its notoriously porous borders with Burma, through which pass 90 percent of the drugs bound for the United States and Europe. Thailand, which has been internationally acclaimed for getting its own opium farmers to switch to other cash crops, seems far less interested in curbing the corrupt, but extremely lucrative, links between Burmese drug lords and their Thai-based distributors.

The United States could further demonstrate its principles by helping to keep the international spotlight focused on the publicity-shy Burmese regime. The U.S. Senate and House passed resolutions last summer, sponsored, respectively, by Senator Daniel P. Moynihan and Representative Stephen Solarz, Democrats of New York, condemning Burmese government violence against its citizens. Such actions cannot but help deter internal repression. In addition, visible expressions of global concern—exemplified in a joint statement by the 12 nations of the European Community condemning human rights abuses in Burma—are welcome.

The Burmese military seems to have no problem finding suppliers for replenishing its arms and weapons arsenal, including nations that have publicly denounced Burma and ostensibly cut off aid. Burma's sole foreign joint venture is with the West German firm Fritz Werner Industrie-Ausrüstungen, which among many other things, manufactures and exports arms and chemicals. Significantly, 88 percent of Fritz Werner Industrie-Ausrüstungen shares are indirectly controlled by the West

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German government, and some of the company's directors are West German government officials. Bonn was the second-largest donor of foreign aid to Burma until it suspended aid last year, and its apparent role in supplying arms to a land engaged in a civil war seems hypocritical.

Since 90 percent of Burma's foreign exchange comes from foreign grants and aid, the wisdom of bartering for arms with gems, minerals and other exportable commodities rather than using revenue from these natural resources for national development is highly questionable.

If Burma had erupted 25 years earlier the reaction of neighboring nations and the superpowers would have been totally different. But the region's geopolitics have shifted, due to China's modernization drive and India's self-appointed role as protector of democracy and stability in the subcontinent, and will likely shift further in light of an impending Sino-Soviet rapprochement.

Historically introverted Thailand, meanwhile, has taken a surprisingly aggressive approach toward its western neighbor. The Thip Tharn Thong Company is only one of several Thai firms that have rushed in to strike business deals, worth millions of dollars, for fishing, hotel and logging concessions. The latter is particularly troubling after Thailand's passage of a strict new antideforestation law. While India has reacted with hostility to the "new" Burmese regime, closing off trade routes between the two countries, Thailand is making a concerted effort to be friends with the Saw Maung government in order to launch—with a view to dominating—a regional "Golden Arc" of developing nations, including Burma, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam.

VII

The Saw Maung regime, eager to project stability and openness, has announced a number of quick fixes, such as giving back to the nation its original name of the Union of Burma and renaming the Burma Socialist Program Party a less threatening "National Unity Party." The border trade between Burma and China's Yunnan province, estimated to be around \$1 billion annually both ways, has been legitimized. A liberal code regulating foreign investment was hastily drawn up last November, followed by an announcement lifting the prohibition of onshore oil exploration.

Much of the country's riches, however, lie in remote areas

made inaccessible by lack of basic infrastructure and civil war. Despite the promise of economic reform, without a realistic political solution to the draining ethnic wars, there can be no long-term prospects for peace and prosperous stability in Burma.

No one, certainly not the patient Burmese people, has ever been served by underestimating Ne Win. Thirty years ago, when he was still considered something of a hero, having voluntarily relinquished his 18-month caretaker government and turned down a nomination for the Magsaysay Award, Asia's Nobel Prize, Ne Win made a hardly original, but nonetheless chilling remark. On the occasion of what turned out to be the country's last free elections, he declared: "Let the country make its own choice. It will get the government it deserves."¹⁰

What the country really deserves is free and fair elections for all people in Burma, including the ethnic groups who have indicated a willingness to discuss reconciliation with Rangoon. The Tatmadaw must risk a fair contest if it wants to legitimize its claim as a true defender of the union. Whatever form of government eventually evolves from Burma's belated brush with democracy (a constitutional dictatorship?) will be the result of a totally and uniquely Burmese solution to the challenge.

¹⁰ *The Nation* (Burma), Dec. 22, 1959.

PRISA/BA-8

Ethnic rank-and-file ousts communist party leaders Left in disarray

By Bertil Lintner in Jinghong, southern Yunnan

For more than two decades, almost the entire length of the border between the Chinese province of Yunnan and Burma's Shan State has been firmly controlled by the Communist Party of Burma (CPB). Successive Burmese Government offensives have never made any significant headway against them. But in the past few months, it has been the CPB's own rank-and-file — the majority of whom are hill-tribesmen — who have taken over the entire organisation and driven the party's orthodox, Burman leadership into exile in China.

The mutiny has removed the "communist spectre" which has been the Burmese military's justification for perpetuating its dominant position in government, and resulted in the splintering of the CPB into at least four separate armies. But whether the transformation of the insurgency into essentially an ethnic one will facilitate a political solution to Burma's decades-long civil war remains unclear.

The first step was taken when Pheung Kva-shin, the local commander of Kokang in an area on the Burmese side of the frontier which is dominated by ethnic Chinese, openly challenged the CPB's top leadership and took over the CPB's Northern Bureau headquarters at Mong Ko on 14 March (REVIEW, 30 Mar.).

Then, late on 16 April, the 12th Brigade dominated by the Wa hill-tribesmen who make up the bulk of the CPB's 10-15,000 strong fighting force, stormed general headquarters at Panghsang, smashed portraits of the communist icons Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and Mao, destroyed party literature and, most importantly, seized the well-stocked central armoury.

The CPB leaders, apparently taken by surprise, fled across the Nam Hka border river into China. The following morning, Panghsang was in the hands of the mutineers and similar rebellions soon occurred in all other CPB areas. A few especially disliked party leaders, among them Soe Thein, the political commissar of the CPB's northeastern base area, and Mva Thaung, who held the same position in the northern Wa Hills, were detained by the rebels.

The CPB's clandestine radio station was also taken over and on 18 April the mutineers broadcast their first denouncement of what they termed "the narrow racial policies" of the old leadership. Another broadcast, monitored by the REVIEW in the

southern Yunnanese town of Jinghong on 6 May, accused the CPB leaders of having lived in comfort in Panghsang while ordinary soldiers were dying in the battlefield.

At first glance, the split appears to have been along ethnic lines. The deposed CPB leaders — altogether a few hundred people — were the only Burmans in the base area along the Chinese frontier. But Sai Noom Pan, the Shan commander of the CPB's former 768 Brigade in the hills north of Kengtung, emphasised in an interview that there was a political element as well. He said his group supports not only the National Democratic Front (NDF), a non-communist umbrella organisation comprising 11 anti-



Rangoon ethnic resistance armies, but also the pro-democracy student movement in the urban areas of central Burma.

"When I was a student in Rangoon, I was shot and wounded during the first anti-government demonstrations at the university on 7 July 1962," he said. It was Sai Noom Pan's unit that briefly captured the garrison town of Mong Yang immediately after the

military takeover on 18 September 1988 (REVIEW, 6 Oct. '88). He confirmed that the attack had been launched in solidarity with the students in Rangoon when they were being gunned down by government troops in the capital as the country's pro-democracy movement gained momentum.

But even so, the ethnic composition of what used to be the CPB's army will make it difficult to keep all the troops in one organisation now that the former unifying factor of communist ideology has been discarded. There are already signs that the CPB is breaking up into various regional armies which may pull in different directions.

The Kokang group, which also controls the Mong Ko base area as well as some guerilla zones in central Shan State, appears to be operating independently. The Was of the CPB's former Northern and Southern Wa districts and the Panghsang headquarters area have formed the Burma National United Party (BNUP), which also controls the broadcasting station.

This new group is led by the only two Was who once were admitted as alternate members of the CPB's central committee: Kyauk Ni Lai and Pao Yo Chang. The former is the BNUP's general secretary while the latter is the chief of its armed wing, the Burma National United Army (BNUA). The BNUP/BNUA leadership, headquartered at Panghsang, also includes Zau Mai, a Kachin who used to be the military commander of the CPB's northeastern war zone, and Li Ziru, one of the few remaining Chinese volunteers who joined the CPB in the late 1960s.

On 15 May, the Shan-dominated 768 Brigade declared its independence and assumed the name Noom Suk Harn, "the Young Brave Warriors," the title taken by the first Shan rebels of the late 1950s. Its chairman is Khun Mvint, a veteran Shan resistance leader who belonged to the original Noom Suk Harn. The military leaders are Sai Noom Pan and Zhang Zhi Ming, another of the erstwhile Chinese volunteers who have stayed behind in Burma.

The Noom Suk Harn seems to be cooperating with the Mekong River Division of the CPB's former administration — which was also referred to as the 815 War Zone prior to the recent mutiny. Its military commander for many years, Lin Ming Xian, is also a Chinese volunteer of the late 1960s. Although he is the son-in-law of Pheung Kva-shin, leader of the Kokang group, he has set up his own group called the National Democratic Army.

Hence, the CPB's former army has in effect already broken up into at least four separate groupings though these, at least in theory, still liaise with each other. In the last former CPB base area, near Kambaiti in Kachin State, the local forces appear to have joined hands with the rebel Kachin Independence Army, an NDF member. Smaller units of CPB troops, numbering only a few

hundred, in Tenasserim and Arakan — well away from the minority areas along the Chinese frontier — might well be all that is left of the once powerful CPB.

From the very beginning, China's reaction to these unprecedented developments was deemed crucial since the old CPB had to feed its army largely with rations bought from across the frontier — and the new groups would also have to seek a similar working relationship with the Chinese.

Local sources in Jinghong said that rice supplies have been halted by the Chinese, and that the deposed CPB leaders are being kept under house arrest. The old CPB chairman, Thakin Ba Thein Tin, his secretary Khin Maung Gyi and all the other escapees from Panghsang are in the small border town of Meng Lien while those who fled Mong Ko are being kept at Man Hai just across the frontier.

While official Chinese policy is to remain neutral in the conflict, local authorities in Yunnan — with whom both the deposed leaders and the mutineers have maintained

these efforts, Rangoon has managed to solicit the support of Lo Hsing-han, a former opium warlord from Kokang who now lives in Lashio, as well as Aung Gyi, a political leader in Rangoon who is considered close to the military. Lo is reported to have visited Kokang on 20-21 March for talks with the mutineers. A meeting between Kokang representatives, Lo Hsing-han and Aung Gyi — who had travelled up from Rangoon — took place in Lashio on 20 April.

Hardly by coincidence, Brig.-Gen. Khin Nyunt, the director of military intelligence, together with Col Maung Thint, the chief of the Burmese army's northeastern command in Lashio, went to the town of Kunlong near Kokang two days later. Well-informed sources assert that Pheung Kya-fu, Pheung Kya-shin's younger brother, met with the government officers at Kunlong and a temporary ceasefire was agreed upon.

"But that does not amount to a surrender," one leader of the mutiny told the REVIEW. "It was a tactical manoeuvre to win time. Likewise, the government appears to



Tsaleu children at school: now under control of Shan rebels.

close relations for years — might have a different approach. The REVIEW observed a steady stream of trucks heavily laden with timber moving from the Burmese border to Jinghong — and Chinese consumer goods going in the opposite direction. Tax on this trade provides the insurgents their main income, and they should be able to spend it on at least non-combatant material from China.

The Burmese Government's reaction to the mutiny has been surprisingly muted — perhaps because it has been surprised by the sudden removal of the communist threat which in large part justified their dominant position in Burmese society. The military authorities have consistently alleged that the 1988 student-led pro-democracy movement was orchestrated by the CPB and that certain political parties, notably the National League for Democracy, were infiltrated by communists. Now that the CPB is defunct, it will become more difficult to play up the communist issue in Burmese politics.

Interestingly, however, the government has made some attempts to open a dialogue with at least some of the CPB mutineers. In

be closely watching developments in our area, at least for the time being. So far, there have been no clashes between us and the Burmese army since the mutiny broke out."

How long this stalemate will remain depends to a large extent on what links the CPB mutineers may forge with other ethnic rebel groups in Burma. If some of them indeed join the NDF, that front will be the only armed insurgency in the country. In theory, this could facilitate a political solution to Burma's decades-long civil war since there now are only ethnic rebels in the country and no communists.

But given the Rangoon regime's past record of demanding surrender and showing little willingness to concede to any rebel demands, it is more likely that its strategy will be to try to split the ex-CPB forces and then launch a military operation against them. ■

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US bill to ban furniture imports from Burma teak

Thai exporters worried

By Jeerawat Krongkaew

FURNITURE exporters have expressed concern over a bill proposed by a member of the US Senate to prohibit the importation into the United States of teak products exported from Thailand but originating from Burma.

They have asked the prime minister and the Commerce Ministry to lobby American legislators against the bill.

Senator Daniel Moynihan has introduced a bill that will ban the importation of teak wood and fish products originating from Burma.

He said such a ban was necessary to prevent further financial subsidization of the present Burmese regime.

Thai Furniture Industry Association Manager Sanpakit Tavornwongsa said his members were concerned about the bill since America is Thailand's biggest market for furniture.

He said last year 122 Thai

furniture factories exported furniture products worth Bt1.7 billion to the US.

The value is expected to exceed Bt1.9 billion this year, of which about 20 per cent is made up from teak wood.

He said the bill would be as protectionist as the previous Jenkins Bill to curb imports of Thai textiles and garments into the US.

Sanpakit said the association has submitted letters of concern to the prime minister, the commerce minister, the agriculture minister, the foreign minister, the Export Development Committee, the Federation of Thai Industries and the Board of Trade.

The government essentially has been asked to lobby against the bill.

He said it would be difficult for furniture manufacturers to prove the country of origin of the teak.

Burma, he said, is an independent state and could determine its own trade and foreign policies.

Thai furniture manufacturers are likely to bear the total financial burden as users of Burmese and

non-Burmese teak.

The US government earlier revoked the Generalized System of Preferences granted to Burma, citing its failure to protect internationally recognized workers' rights.

The US government has condemned the Saw Muang regime for its failure to undertake political reforms and for its ruthless action against Burmese student-led rebellions.

In his remark to the Senate, Moynihan said: "The bill... would have the same effect as the President's commendable decision to further the economic isolation of the Burmese military government until such time as it commits itself to the respect for human rights, political liberalization and national reconciliation."

He cited the names of several Thai firms which have been granted, with the co-operation of the Thai government, concessions to cut logs in Burma and to fish in Burmese waters.

He said the money earned by the Burmese government would be used to maintain their power and not help ordinary Burmese.

JACKBOOTS ECHO ON BURMA'S ROAD TO DEMOCRACY

RANGOON • SAN SALVADOR • WASHINGTON

■ NERVOUS GENERALS

Burma's military rulers are tightening the security screws, fearing that the country may again be convulsed by the kind of mass pro-democracy protests that were crushed 10 months ago by an Army massacre as brutal as anything that happened in Beijing's Tienanmen Square.

Although the Army rulers promised a transition to democracy and free multiparty elections next year, opposition leaders say the generals are doing everything possible to obstruct the process, and tension is building. Two bomb incidents heightened fears, and last week the regime placed Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of a nationalist hero, founder of the opposition National League for Democracy and the Army's most vocal critic, under house arrest after trucking thousands of troops into Rangoon, shutting off links to the outside world and decreeing tough new summary penalties for martial-law violators.

Although the treasury is empty, the flow of international aid has been suspended and living conditions are worsening by the day, the Burmese rulers are bartering lucrative timber, gemstone and fishing concessions to the generals in neighboring Thailand in exchange for cash to keep their troops in guns, bullets and rice.

Gen. Ne Win, the dictator who turned Burma into a hermit nation before stepping down during the upheavals last year, is said to be pulling the junta's strings from behind the scenes and clearly is willing to see Burma torn apart before surrendering power.

■ BRACING FOR CHANGE

El Salvador's new right-wing President Alfredo Cristiani promised his long-suffering people things would change, and, in only two months, they have. Politically, economically and militarily the situation is now much worse, and the outlook is increasingly gloomy.

Advisers are pushing Cristiani toward tighter credit, higher interest rates and a de facto devaluation that will hammer the poorest, in a nation where 87 percent already live below the poverty line. What's left of the non-foreign-aid economy is withering rapidly as prices for coffee, which accounts for 70 percent of El

Salvador's export earnings, plummet.

Not since the death-squad days has El Salvador's body politic been so polarized. The centrist and leftist opposition refuses to join a Cristiani commission to negotiate with the country's Marxist guerrillas. A wave of political killings of right-wing ideologues—including Cristiani's own chief of staff—prompts a draft of harsh new antiterror statutes that many fear could encourage new right-wing violence.

The rebels, meantime, are stepping up pressure in the capital and the countryside, using fresh arms flowing in via Nicaragua, to push the Army to the kind of overreaction that fans the fires of revolution. They are perilously close to succeeding at that.

■ A STAND-DOWN IN KOREA?

South Korean and American defense officials declare that there can be no thought of withdrawing any of the 43,000 U.S. troops stationed in Korea at this time. The operative phrase is "at this time." Congress and the Pentagon keep coming back to the cost of keeping so large a tripwire stretched across South Korea in a time of tighter budgets.

Young Korean protesters chant "Yankee go home," and some American lawmakers want to do just that. Pending legislation could bring 10,000 GI's home over the next three years. One senator suggests that a force of only 3,000 Americans is enough of a token to guarantee swift U.S. retaliation if North Korea strikes south as it did in 1950. They say a more prosperous South Korea ought to be able to defend itself.

South Korean defense analysts worry that even a small U.S. cutback would send the wrong signal to North Korea and its "Great Leader," Kim il Sung, untouched by reform currents sweeping the rest of the Communist world. Seoul offers to increase the \$277 million in cash and some \$2 billion in goods and services it already ponies up each year toward the upkeep of U.S. forces. The bottom line, however, is that standing guard in Korea costs Washington \$2.6 billion a year—a target that may prove too great a temptation for the budget cutters.

by Joseph L. Galloway with foreign-bureau reports

THE CRISIS IN BURMA

Back from the Heart of Darkness?

Moksha Yitri

PRISA/BA-11

Practically all the violent, destructive, and depressing events in the turbulent four decades of independent Burma seemed to have been compressed and replayed in 1988. Along with the riots, mass arrests, and brutal killings, the country witnessed the fall of three presidents and a one-party state, only to be followed once more by a military coup. At the same time the national economy, already in deep trouble, was reduced to tatters with the poorer people barely able to subsist (40% of the population was reported below absolute poverty level in 1985¹ and the proportion is certainly much higher now). The 1988 rice crop was harvested but distribution was certain to be a tremendous problem, aggravated by an acute shortage of fuel—the worst shortage yet faced by this one-time self-sufficient country.

In retrospect, this cataclysm had been building for a long time: in effect it was the climax and denouement of 26 years of one-party rule under the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP) set up by military strongman Ne Win after his takeover in March 1962. The pace of decline gathered momentum in the last five years, with even government figures showing that the annual growth rate had slipped to 0.45% from an average of 3.3% in 1980–85. Nevertheless, each year government officials would dutifully lay the blame for the failing economy on the international economic situation and repeat the litanies of the party line before going back to its rigid central planning and the resulting stranglehold on the economy. In the sec-

Moksha Yitri is the pseudonym of a Burmese citizen who lives in Rangoon. He describes himself as a middle class professional who has received some education abroad in addition to his degree from Rangoon University. For the past year he has involved himself in politics although he is not affiliated with any of the 183 parties that have registered for the elections. The author hopes that this article will provide a better understanding to the outside world of what happened in Burma in 1988.

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1. UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children*, 1988.

ond half of 1987, however, a series of events took place that finally nudged the country beyond its limit of tolerance.

In August Party Chairman Ne Win publicly admitted that mistakes had been made and that changes were not only necessary but inevitable, part of the nature of things. He blamed high officials for suppressing facts and directed that they make preparations for any necessary policy changes "in time for the next Party Congress." No date was set for this, but the next congress was due to be held in late 1989.

To indicate that changes were being made, most of the key agricultural crops, including rice, were decontrolled at the beginning of September 1987. The people took this action as an initial step in the right direction, the first of the promised policy reforms. But within a week their hopes were dashed; on September 5 the three largest currency denominations (25, 35, and 75 kyats) were declared worthless. This came less than two years after the previous demonetization, and this time there was no arrangement for reconversion to legal tender. The result was devastating. Most Burmese commercial transactions are settled in cash, with reserves and savings also held in cash, due in part to the inefficient state-monopolized banking system. Needless to say, all these were wiped out. This financial disaster provoked some student unrest—at the Rangoon Institute of Technology (RIT) on the outskirts of the city—and consequently all educational institutions were closed "for the Thadinkyut (mid-term) holidays." Remarkably, the great majority of the people accepted their losses passively and stoically in spite of sustaining considerable hardship.

Then, in December 1987, a least-developed country status was granted to Burma by the United Nations, approving an application received earlier in the year from Rangoon seeking a partial reprieve from economic problems and mounting debt. The Burmese people were neither informed of the application nor its approval directly but had to learn about it through the foreign media or by word of mouth. On January 4, 1988, marking the fortieth anniversary of Burma's independence, a message of felicitations from the West German ambassador stated that because of recent developments, all outstanding loans to Burma had been converted to outright grants. This international recognition of indigence, while not having any immediate repercussions, highlighted and certainly added to the growing popular resentment (especially among the students) of the country's mismanagement.

This resentment broke to the surface in the middle of March, again sparked by disturbances at the RIT. A nonpolitical off-campus incident grew into a violent demonstration, and during its suppression a number of students were killed. The protests spread to the University of Rangoon's main campus nearer to the downtown area. Antigovernment speeches

were made and some property destroyed as the students attempted to defend themselves from the riot police and army troops who surrounded the campus on March 17. That afternoon the authorities moved in, arrested a number of student protestors, and dispersed the rest. The following day demonstrations spread to the downtown area and increased in violence. Government stores, offices, and cars were wrecked and burned; at a number of places the army and police opened fire on crowds, killing scores of people. Hundreds more were arrested, and authorities later admitted that at least 41 suffocated to death in a jam-packed police van. It was here that the paramilitary police (the Lon Htein units) earned their reputation for widespread brutality. The army, mostly in the form of the 22nd Light Infantry Division brought in by BSPP General Secretary Sein Lwin, was also actively involved but not yet so prominently. The general revulsion centered on the behavior of the riot police. Primarily because of the harsh crackdown, the disturbances quickly died away and the country returned to a tottering "normalcy" and its hand-to-mouth economy.

It is worth noting that at this point the government failed to recognize, or was unwilling to acknowledge, the full dimensions of the popular unrest. Other than the formation of a government inquiry commission to go over the RIT incident, nothing was done to address whatever other causes might have contributed to events. The April session (the main and budget session) of the Pyithu Hluttaw (national assembly) was remarkable for its impassivity in the face of such mounting pressures, underscoring the true nature of the institution.

In June, when the universities and colleges reopened for the new term, student agitation resumed stronger than before. There was a week of large student protests, centered mainly on the Rangoon University campus. It is now apparent that this was the critical time, the watershed that ultimately decided the fate of Burma's one-party dictatorship. By June 17, an overwhelming majority of college and secondary students had joined the protest, which was gravitating toward demands for freedom and democracy, and large numbers of people came to realize the potential of their mass movement in the struggle for these goals. The students initially demanded the release of their arrested colleagues, the reinstatement of those expelled, and the reestablishment of the Students' Union, which had been outlawed in 1962. But soon, while still adhering to their declared intention for peaceful demonstrations, they began to call for the downfall of the BSPP government itself.

In typical fashion, the authorities closed down the University of Rangoon and the Institute of Medicine on June 20, and thereby forced the protestors (now joined by an increasingly aroused public) out onto the streets. There was a bloody confrontation the following day at Myenigon,

an important intersection, and student demonstrators as well as some riot police were killed. Section 144 (which prohibits speeches, gatherings, and agitation and enacts a curfew) was declared that same evening. Other college-level institutions in Rangoon were closed on June 22 but secondary schools were not affected. Some student organizers had also gone to Pegu, a town 50 miles to the northeast, and the ensuing protests there caused the deaths of a number of police personnel in addition to demonstrators shot and killed.

The nature and power of the disturbances finally moved the regime to announce on July 7 that an extraordinary session of the BSPP Congress would be held on July 23. At the same time all those who had been detained following the disturbances were released, and students who had been expelled from colleges were allowed to apply for readmission. The party also stated that changes in economic policy would be discussed at the Congress session, together with some modifications of the party constitution. At the time this seemed to be the most that people could conceivably expect; given the pace and extent of change in the past, the very notion of an extraordinary session, let alone the reforms that it might engender, was cause for optimism and hope. One major policy decision that was widely expected was a long-postponed reconsideration of foreign investment in Burma. There was practically no indication that any radical political changes would be forthcoming or even be proposed, much less that Ne Win himself might resign.

The Fateful Summer

The extraordinary Congress session was held, in a departure from normal procedure, at the Saya San Hall in the Kyaikkasan grounds, the former race course. In his opening speech, Ne Win dropped his bombshell. Wasting no words, he inadvertently put into motion the chain of events leading to the biggest and bloodiest civil upheaval in the country's postwar history. He made these major points:

The bloody incidents of March and June 1988 would show that both participants in the disturbances and those supporting them have lost confidence in the government and its guiding party.

It is necessary to ascertain whether a majority of the entire population—or just a minority—have lost faith in this way. I believe that this can be done by holding a nationwide referendum on whether a one- or multiparty system is desired; hence I would propose this to the present Congress.

Should a multiparty system gain the majority of votes, the present Constitution's Chapter 2, Section 11 would have to be amended accordingly. A suitable time would have to be given to prepare for this referendum.

. . . In the event that a multiparty system is chosen, elections for a new Parliament will be held as soon as possible.

Since I feel that I am indirectly responsible for the distressing incidents of March and June, and also because of my advancing age, I would request Party members to allow me to retire from the Chairmanship and membership. . . . This time not only do my immediate colleagues consent to my retirement, they too have expressed their wish to accompany me into retirement. They are U San Yu, U Aye Ko, U Sein Lwin, U Tun Tin, and U Kyaw Htin [i.e., the top five in the party and government hierarchy].

Ne Win then mentioned the lawlessness displayed during the past riots—a pale shadow, it turned out, of what was still to come—and the increased tension at Pyé (Prome) that had forced him to deploy the army there just the day before. Then he stated ominously that violent demonstrations would not be tolerated any more, warning that the army “shoots to hit. It will not fire into the air to scare [the mob].” The final part of his speech was devoted to recounting and exposing ex-Brigadier Aung Gyi's underhandedness in concealing the truth behind the dynamiting of the Rangoon University Students' Union building in July 1962.²

As was to be expected, the Party Congress could not accept the drastic nature of Ne Win's proposal; not even he could convince them to abandon the one-party system that he had created, nor to remove the top-most level of the hierarchy. Too many vested interests, too many careers and futures were involved for the party to destroy itself voluntarily. Ne Win's aims and purposes appeared to clash with those of the organization he had led for so long and clearly showed how badly he had misread his own power base and how far removed from it he had become. From the standpoint of the BSPP, and to the outside world as well, this was another instance of his wild unpredictability. However, another considerable body of opinion held that this was simply a well-orchestrated ruse and that Ne Win would not relinquish the reins of power. But to go beyond mere speculation and understand his root motives, we have only one recourse and that is to consider Burmese history. (Even Ne Win's protégé and successor, Sein Lwin,

2. Aung Gyi was vice chief-of-staff (army) at the time of the military coup in 1962 and was later forced to leave the army and government after disagreeing with the junta's policies. Detained for a short period in 1988 (when Sein Lwin was in power), he is now chairman of the National League for Democracy, the strongest of the newly formed parties.

does not seem to have fully understood the chairman, which may account for his mere 17 days as supreme leader).

It is obvious that Ne Win (and many Burmese) placed his overlordship in the mainstream of Burmese history, even if it was, *de facto*, a barely disguised throwback to feudalism. With advancing age Ne Win became increasingly concerned with his niche in history, particularly in comparison to his one-time contemporary and superior, the late national leader Bogyoke Aung San. Perhaps he was also desperately trying to undo the colossal failures of his years in power, but he lacked the political sensitivity and finesse that would have characterized a more accountable leadership and allowed a peaceful transition.

Traditionally, Burmese kings built pagodas toward the end of their reigns to symbolize the glory and achievements of their rule, to enhance their prestige as patrons of the Buddhist faith, and in some cases, to atone for any misdeeds they might have committed. Ne Win has done the same with the (still unfinished) Maha Wizaya Pagoda just south of the Great Shwedagon, the largest and holiest Buddhist shrine in the country. But this was only a symbolic act, if one discounts the mystical motives, and clearly contemporary Burma needed much more. In this sense, Ne Win's announcement at the Party Congress was not such a surprise after all; it was in effect a modern-day, political parallel to the age-old royal tradition of pagoda building, and the people would have accepted it as such. His turnabout could have worked and borne fruit, but there the parallel ends for the BSPP refused to play the part of an obliging royal council of ministers and put up a stiff (and fatal) resistance.

On July 24, the second day of the Congress, key delegates launched an unprecedented counterattack, taking care not to offend Ne Win. They vigorously denounced the notion of a possible return to a multiparty system, stressing its unsuitability for Burma. They also requested Ne Win and the other leaders to reconsider their plans for retirement. Economic reform, which had been the main purpose and rationale of this Congress, was overshadowed by this other, unexpected distraction. Nevertheless, a sweeping program of reforms, which included the opening of all but a few key commodities and industries to the domestic and foreign private sectors, was announced.

Whatever hopes Ne Win's speech might have kindled were extinguished the following day when the final session unanimously voted against holding the proposed referendum. Ne Win and President San Yu were permitted to resign and, in a move that surprised many, General Secretary Sein Lwin was elevated to the top party post and also was appointed head of state. From the BSPP's angle this made perfect sense, for it guaranteed party strength and continuity, but here again the estrangement from the

people and their national aspirations was all too evident. Sein Lwin was widely perceived as the hatchet man—the hand that had wielded the club—and epitomized all that was brutal and hateful about BSPP/military rule. There could not have been a poorer choice, nor could it have come at a worse moment.

Sensing massive popular resentment, the authorities imposed martial law on metropolitan Rangoon on August 3. With the universities closed and the campuses sealed, the center of protest moved to Shwedagon Pagoda. Small groups of protestors were active there, particularly on July 28, the Full Moon Day of Waso (the beginning of Buddhist Lent), an important day on which people traditionally congregate at pagodas and monasteries. Posters began to appear, some of them calling for a nationwide demonstration on August 8 (8-8-88). Although it was universally understood that protests would continue in one form or another, the response that this agitation would elicit was still far from certain. With the advent of military administration, troops were moved into the city and positioned at intersections and other key points. Still, when the explosion came, the intensity and extent of activity caught everyone by surprise. On the appointed day, August 8, huge demonstrations erupted in all the cities and towns of Burma. In Rangoon that night, a crowd that had remained near the Sule Pagoda in the heart of the downtown area was ordered by soldiers to disperse. The people paid no heed and continued to demonstrate, whereupon the troops opened fire, ushering in the first round of killing. This was repeated the next day in several places throughout Rangoon, and in some other towns as well. Hundreds were mowed down in displays of indiscriminate brutality. In one Rangoon suburb, a U.S. diplomat who was driving to work encountered a crowd of demonstrators confronting an army roadblock. As he tried to inch through the protestors, the troops suddenly opened fire, hitting his car as well as a number of demonstrators. He was able to turn back, however, and even managed to take a number of wounded to safety.

As the shooting went on, hospital staff found it impossible to cope with the flood of casualties; on August 10 nurses from Rangoon General Hospital made a public appeal for a cease-fire. As they carried a placard to this effect in a small procession to the hospital, intending to mount it before the entrance, a truckload of soldiers on the adjacent street shot at them, wounding a number of nurses and killing some other protestors. The carnage was the worst at Rangoon and Sagaing, a town in central Burma near Mandalay. Parts of Rangoon were turned into a free-fire zone, with troops shooting people in tea shops, at bus stops, and even in their homes. Local inhabitants were forced to put up makeshift roadblocks and arm themselves with whatever weapons were available.

By August 11 an impasse had developed with military outposts entrenched as though in a hostile guerrilla zone. Facing the prospects of an urban civil war, the tense situation was substantially defused the next day—and hopes revived—when Sein Lwin unexpectedly resigned from all his posts—party chairman, the presidency, and Pyithu Hluttaw member. Now no one in the country, not even the entire BSPP itself, could have brought this about except Ne Win. Although he had been thwarted during the July Congress, the present bloodletting gave him the necessary justification to unseat Sein Lwin and push his original program through. Widespread jubilation followed the announcement of Sein Lwin's resignations. It was perceived as a significant victory for "people power" and engendered a wave of rising expectations, leading people (incorrectly as it turned out) to believe that they could achieve all their goals if they agitated hard enough.

A Central Committee meeting and Pyithu Hluttaw session were hastily announced for August 19. This time the result was rather more predictable. Dr. Maung Maung, one of the highest-ranking party stalwarts with a civilian background, was chosen to fill the vacant chairmanship. One of his first actions, doubtless with Ne Win's tacit approval, was to form an 11-man public opinion inquiry commission, a step toward the referendum that had been rejected earlier. This no doubt would have led to a belated acceptance of Ne Win's July 23rd proposals, but Maung Maung seems to have felt compelled to observe to the letter the forms and procedures of the party and the Pyithu Hluttaw. In doing so he apparently was swayed by a sense of loyalty and responsibility to the party that was in its ebb; furthermore, he appeared anxious that the coming transition should have a correct constitutional basis. But on a more pragmatic level, Maung Maung's sensibilities and adherence to procedure were out of touch with the times. They were widely interpreted as a waste of time—delaying tactics by a regime with its back to the wall. Had he taken more decisive action at this point, better attuned to the realities of the situation, Maung Maung could have assuaged, at least partly, the rising level of popular rage and impatience.

For one thing, a comprehensive reform package, preferably worked out with the newly resurgent political opposition, would have been a far wiser (and less costly) approach than the grudging, bit-by-bit series of concessions that Maung Maung eventually had to make. A greater willingness initially to accommodate the prevailing political climate would certainly have been better. Instead Maung Maung lifted martial law on the one hand, undermining the one reality that would have lent force and authority to his leadership, while on the other he stalled and dithered in acceding to rising popular demands. This volatile combination set the stage for the

eventual debacle. A series of placating measures were offered by the government—a hike in salaries, the dropping of tax payments on crops, and the easing of restrictions on travel abroad, among others. Trade and business opportunities were also held out in a concerted effort to shift the focus of attention away from politics, but to no avail. These concessions seemed only to goad the people on in their heady demands.

As it turned out, the inquiry commission lasted less than a week. Just as it issued its first statement, which included a sample questionnaire, massive, peaceful demonstrations began once more. Huge processions on August 22 marched from the Lanmadaw area to the front of the General Hospital, now the spiritual center for protest, and also to the U.S. embassy. On August 24, as crowds surged over the barbed wire surrounding City Hall, military administration was withdrawn, both in Rangoon as well as in Prome (where it had been in force since July 22). The inquiry commission was abolished and yet another (the third) emergency session of the BSPP Congress and Pyithu Hluttaw were called for September 12 and 13. Maung Maung addressed the nation again, stating that a national referendum commission would be formed to ascertain the type of political system the people wished to adopt, in essence an admission of acquiescence from the BSPP. But clearly this concession came too late and was now irrelevant. The people were aroused now and would not be satisfied; they began to demand the ouster of the BSPP regime, the installation of an interim government, and a speedy revival of full democracy.

During this brief period of relative political "freedom," leading dissenters in Burma such as Aung Gyi (who was released from detention on August 25), former Armed Forces Chief-of-Staff Tin Oo, and Aung San Su Kyi, the daughter of Bogyoke Aung San, appeared and gave speeches at huge rallies. But at the same time a wave of lawlessness began that later turned into total anarchy. Widespread looting occurred as well as destruction of state property and installations and, more ominously, the killing of policemen, suspected government agents, and alleged arsonists by enraged mobs. The government machinery ceased to function and massive popular demonstrations took place almost every day. In another attempt to relieve the crisis, Maung Maung on September 1 presented an explanation of why it was necessary to follow constitutional processes. He also promised that the Students' Union would be revived and a new building constructed for it. However, his overtures fell on deaf ears and were rejected out-of-hand.

The Congress session was held on September 10, two days ahead of schedule. Acceding to the overwhelming realities, the planned referendum was canceled and the decision taken to hold general elections under a multiparty system within three months. The Pyithu Hluttaw ratified this the next day and a five-member elections commission was formed. The

following week produced an illusion of severance of the BSPP from its main power base, the Burmese Armed Forces (Tatmadaw). The regime also announced that all state employees were released from the BSPP and were to refrain from joining any political parties. This represented another critical juncture at which Burma's future might have been turned onto a more favorable course, but it was not to be. The various opposition groups refused to be appeased and continued to clamor for the abolition of the BSPP and for the government to step down. In doing so they inadvertently provided grounds for a military coup.

Two notable incidents—some insist they were engineered by the Tatmadaw itself—appear to have precipitated the military takeover. In the first one, demonstrators at a rally near the Ministry of Defence were ordered to disperse by soldiers at the gate and were later subjected to a show of force by an armed convoy. After the initial alarm, an angry crowd armed with spears and swords gathered on the road leading to the ministry and a tense confrontation ensued. However, student and opposition leaders showed up and controlled the situation. Then, on September 17, a small force of soldiers guarding the Trade Ministry fired at a procession of demonstrators and wounded a few of them. This time the reaction was stronger, with people coming from all over the city, commandeering buses, and laying siege to the ministry building. The place was wrecked, but some monks persuaded the soldiers to surrender and they took them away after seizing a quantity of arms.³ The Tatmadaw obviously considered the events as provocations it could not ignore, while also providing a strong enough pretext for a coup. On Sunday evening, September 18, truckloads of troops were deployed at key positions in Rangoon, and a radio broadcast announced that the Tatmadaw had assumed all the powers of the state. A curfew from 8 P.M. to 4 A.M. was immediately imposed. Taken aback, the protestors retreated to their neighborhoods where they continued to shout defiance.

The following morning crowds, still numbering in the thousands, returned to the city streets and denounced the military takeover. This time the soldiers threw away all restraint and went on a killing spree, the scale of which had never before been encountered in a peacetime action in Burma. The savagery may have surprised many people but it was actually no more than standard behavior for the Burmese army, although it was on a bigger scale and in an urban setting. That city dwellers were finally being subjected to the kind of treatment that had been commonplace in the ethnic-minority operational zones for decades was borne out by the readi-

3. Some of these arms were recovered on October 28 from the Thayettaw monastery complex next to the Rangoon General Hospital.

ness, the alacrity with which the army shot and killed people. This was not a case of a professional fighting force reluctantly involved in a civil action, nor was it a matter of simple soldiers being forced to open fire. And it was not an isolated incident. It was full-blown military suppression pursued with a vengeance, naked military force used against unarmed or poorly armed civil disobedience, and the result was carnage. Rangoon, in two months, suffered more killed and wounded than had all the insurgent groups in two years.⁴ The Tatmadaw was revealed for what it had become—a predatory and distorted product of the BSPP years. What had happened was paradigmatic of the failings and the self-defeating proclivities of the country's military-socialist dictatorship. Burma awoke to find itself occupied by its own army—as though by a foreign power.

The Mandate of the Gun

There is no doubt that the Burmese military has suffered a severe and perhaps irreversible political setback, despite its real gains in power. It lost a great deal of what is most important for an army: popular support. There is at present an all-out campaign to refurbish its image and as a result, the media (entirely state-controlled again) is overloaded with interminable lists of "donations"⁵ for soldiers fighting the old standbys—the Burma Communist Party and the Karen insurgents. At the same time the Tatmadaw has unburdened itself of the liability of its political facade, the BSPP (now rechristened the National Unity Party) (NUP), allowing it to draw in its lines and shorten its perimeter to gain a stronger position. Although the Tatmadaw has indicated its noninvolvement in politics, this certainly should not be taken to mean that its future role is going to be less prominent. If anything, it will be even more pronounced at a "suprapolitical" level. For the army to be content in a purely military niche would be contrary to its nature. Accordingly, one of the most important questions being asked today concerns the all-too-probable maintenance of the army's primordial and intrinsic links with the NUP; there is much anxiety over this relationship and the negative impact it would have upon the country's polity.⁶ On both occasions in the past when the Tatmadaw became involved in national politics, there were dire consequences for all concerned.

4. Only a small percentage of those killed could be recovered for decent burial. Most were carted away by troops to be dumped into common graves or crematoria. A full accounting of the dead thus may not be possible; most people expect the total to be in the thousands.

5. People drawing money from banks or government employees receiving paychecks would be told that part of the amounts due to them had been deducted as "donations."

6. Historic precedents exist for this. Memories are still fresh, notably of the 1958–60 period when a number of senior military officers, recently revealed to have acted at Ne Win's instigation, backed the "Stable" faction of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League

From a professional soldier's view, Burma's whole long experiment with military-socialist rule has been an unmitigated disaster. The abject failure of fulfilling even its primary role and main justification—that of keeping the peace and putting down armed insurrection—amply demonstrates that the army has badly overextended itself and in the process has become a brutal, blunt weapon incapable of discrimination. There is some hope, however, in the evolution of the officer corps. The old guard, those who had joined with very little education during the independence and insurrection periods—is gradually giving way to the younger and better-trained generation. The front runners from the first group that **was** graduated in 1959 with degrees from the Defense Services Academy have now reached brigadier-general rank and are in command of military regions (of which there are nine). Their careers have spanned the BSPP era, and they were shaped in this environment. Nevertheless, they may be less inclined to follow in the footsteps of less sophisticated officers such as Sein Lwin.

Like many of his kind, Ne Win had not prepared a successor; even if he had, that individual could not have hoped to repeat the unique blend of personality, position, and national circumstance that found expression in Ne Win. In the same vein, no general could aspire to such stature or emulate Ne Win's role in national politics. Any future general rash enough or overambitious enough to attempt this would only bring disaster upon the country and himself. Whatever course the Tatmadaw might chart for itself, it will certainly not voluntarily diminish its status or primacy, or its kingmaker's role. On the contrary, it shows every intention of remaining the arbiter of national destiny. Just how much influence it shall bring to bear on political life, in particular its attitude toward the coming general elections and possible future leadership, is a source of considerable speculation and concern.

It appears now, however, that the Tatmadaw may adhere to its declarations of intent and allow the development of a pluralistic political system, not from altruism or any implicit belief in the inevitability of political evolution, but from a recognition of its sheer incapacity to do otherwise. An army at least can be expected to recognize an untenable defensive position, poorly supported and facing pressure from many fronts. For the first time the Tatmadaw is facing the prospect of having to fight an increasingly united array of insurgents, strengthened by the present crisis,⁷ without even the illusion of popular support to sustain it. The present propaganda

(AFPFL) and attempted to swing the general elections with strong-arm tactics. When their party lost and their roles became publicly known, Ne Win dismissed the lot of them from the army.

7. Government news releases on October 21 and 27, 1988, stated that during the period October 1–27, there had been 105 clashes with various insurgent forces in which the Burmese

campaign by the military regime seems like a desperate attempt to convince and reassure *itself* rather than the larger public at which it is aimed.⁸ Furthermore, the military is now shackled with the task of running an imitation of an obsolete government and an economy in shambles with not much more than a mixture of bluff (the propaganda blitz) and the continued use of brutal force. Under these circumstances not even Ne Win himself could lead a military regime and hang on for any length of time. What keeps the country relatively quiet now is the hope of substantive political liberalization and elections for a new government. In effect, the Tatmadaw has painted itself into a corner and is being forced to restrict itself to a narrowly circumscribed role. Aware of the consequences, the military must stick to its declared commitment to hold elections and hand power over to an elected government.

It might be sensible for the NUP to play down its military connections, although this would not help it to regain the already-lost youth vote, the vote of the ethnic minorities, and that of a large segment of the urban population and practically everyone else who "experienced" the soldiers in action. Too many factors seem to vitiate the Tatmadaw's continued overt involvement in politics; thus it may be more inclined to try to bring about an "acceptable" national leadership and strive to maintain its preeminent status. In other words, this would entail a *withdrawal* to a position of *greater* strength, all contingent, of course, upon present and former military leaders moderating their views and actions.

Any appraisal of the kind of stance the Tatmadaw might adopt must also consider the nascent political elements and the account they give of themselves. By the second week of November 1988, some 120 political parties had been registered in Burma with more appearing every day. Even though these groups are expected to form coalitions, the specter of a return to factionalism and disunity has already become cause for concern. If this does occur and a debilitating kind of pluralism were to result, the political initiative could very well return to the military. The year's long

army reported 71 killed and 152 wounded while the rebels suffered 51 killed, 6 captured, and 19 surrendered.

8. The military exercises total control of its internal propaganda. Troops being moved into Rangoon and other towns before the coup were told that the Burmese Communist Party (BCP) and other insurgent agitators were behind the demonstrations and intended to seize power. Following the takeover, every effort was made to suppress the truth about the slaughter of the protestors: officers and men at outlying military units were informed that the troops in Rangoon had acted with the greatest restraint (such as demarcating three successive lines which the "unruly mob" overran; firing first into the air, etc.) and had only been forced to defend themselves when the protestors tried to grapple with them and seize their arms. None other than the official, sanitized version was permitted to be discussed, and the men were barred from listening to foreign broadcasts.

crisis, a microcosm of the past, has shown the two bitter extremes to which it is still possible for Burma to go: total anarchy and chaos followed by a pendulum swing to the iron grip of military rule. It serves as a warning that a "middle way" must be found if there is to be peace and stability and a viable chance for social and economic development.

Conclusion

Of all the stresses and weaknesses revealed by the crisis of 1988 (and there are many), the foremost is how little the rulers and the ruled have understood each other. For 26 years, political life had been stunted and sidetracked into a dead end. The myopic BSPP leadership, the individuals safe in their lifetime tenures, was badly out of touch with reality. The people, on the other hand, had been isolated from everything even remotely resembling genuine political activity, including normal forms of dissent. These failings met each other with unprecedented force in the transitional crisis of 1988 and led to the inevitable results. At a deeper level this was a very basic confrontation—between oppressors and oppressed, the rule of the gun against popular aspirations for liberty. It arose against the backdrop of Ne Win's dictatorship—a relapse into feudalism in somewhat poorly disguised military-socialist trappings. That this anachronism persisted for so long is attributable to a unique set of circumstances, among which are Ne Win's dominant personality, Burma's resultant isolation, and the maleability and factionalism of Burmese society. We see today a society coming to grips with its own dark creation, the army, whose disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force has kindled a deep and massive response within the populace. No amount of clever manipulation by the regime can hold back the deeply felt antipathy against the soldiers, and the Tatmadaw will have to live with this as history.

While the conflict today resembles in force and depth the surge of nationalism that began with the Saya San Peasant Rebellion of 1930–32, gained in strength during the years of World War II, and finally culminated in the attainment of independence in 1948, the picture this time is clouded by the complexities of contending with an entirely home-grown oppressing power. The expected general elections and a return to democratic government are in this sense only superficialities. The stronger undercurrent is a fundamental revulsion against the rule of the gun, just as the earlier national resistance was a struggle against foreign rule. Reconciliation will not come easily, and a military or military-backed regime cannot hope to be a viable government, much less an effective one.⁹ The

9. Far from promoting reconciliation, the military government has sacked hundreds of state employees for actively taking part in the demonstrations for democracy.

impact upon Burmese life has reached beyond the realm of politics and government; the collective national psyche itself has suffered. The Karens and Shans and Kachins were subjected to the rule of the gun long before it was felt in Rangoon. Sooner or later the people of Burma had to face their situation squarely, and having awakened to it must now find out for themselves how to deal with it. None of the formidable tasks confronting the country—restoring individual liberties, alleviating poverty and underdevelopment, and repairing the unraveled ties with the ethnic minorities—can be approached without settling the predominant issue of governance.

The resurgent democracy coalition that is expected to form the next elected government will have to be strong and flexible enough to bear the strain of the coming transition years, when the failures and shortcomings of the past regimes will have to be put right. If there is to be a reasonable chance of success for any democratically elected government and for the national recovery that would be its main objective, the newly emergent political leaders must strive to hold their individual and factional tendencies in check. It seems that they could not but have learned from the past, and would recognize that success or failure in the crucial first two or three years of a return to parliamentary democracy depends upon unity as much as upon the psychological transformation of the people, the means available for economic recovery, and most of all, an acceptable *modus vivendi* with the military. This last issue, the future of the Tatmadaw, is something that goes deeper than politics, something that must be addressed with extreme delicacy. Obviously, it would be best if internal peace could be achieved so as to reduce the need for a counterinsurgency-oriented military.

Recent events have added even greater import to any eventual accommodation with the armed ethnic insurrections. The new national mood might well pave the way for early negotiations, accompanied by a ceasefire and a "nonhostile balance of forces." Such an arrangement could be followed closely by accelerated development in the generally backward, contested areas. The regional autonomy issue must also be reappraised and debated in a democratic forum and included in the expected revision of the national constitution.

The year's crisis has left Burma with a number of real gains, albeit obtained at great cost. The uprising has lifted the country a notch above the dismal collection of totalitarian states, communist and noncommunist, which continue to suffer silently, and though it is still premature to maintain that recovery is around the corner, the conditions for change are already here. This brings us to the question of Ne Win's legacy. He is doubtless still at the helm in this last phase of his stewardship. Just as he

has always forced his will upon the country, he now plans to do the same with history. This is not so incongruous, considering that he identifies himself with a familiar figure in precolonial Burmese history, the warrior-monarch—exemplified by Anawrahta of Pagan—who seeks to unify and strengthen the nation, taking in stride the bloodshed and dislocation incurred by forcible incorporation, suppression of revolt, and extirpation of possible rivals. But Ne Win seems to have missed the other central achievement of those strong unifying kings, that is, the establishment and nurturing of a healthy economy and society.

He is engaged now in fashioning the ultimate paradox: after spending 26 years bringing his country to economic destitution, culminating in unprecedented bloodshed, he must now attempt to win credit by restoring Burma to a vague and shaky pre-1962 condition. In keeping with the spirit of his rule, in which empty gestures figured so importantly, he may now wish to be remembered (and perhaps acclaimed) for bringing back at least the forms and rudiments of decent government. But for all his last-ditch efforts, history is unlikely to forget Ne Win's legacy of national ruin, or the cost of Burma's path to freedom.

Refugee Reports

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"WE ASKED FOR DEMOCRACY AND GOT ONLY BULLETS": STUDENTS AND MINORITIES ON THE THAI-BURMA BORDER*

[In the first three weeks of July, Refugee Reports staff writer Court Robinson was on the Thailand-Burma border, where thousands of Burmese students and ethnic minorities have been forced to flee continued persecution by the military government in Rangoon. Although their plight in many ways parallels that of other Indo-chinese refugees in the region--and that of students in China--little is known about their situation. The report below, based on Robinson's visit, is excerpted from an upcoming USCR issue brief on the subject.]

Following last year's pitiless crackdown by the army on pro-democracy activists in Burma, thousands of high school and college students fled to remote border areas, seeking sanctuary and common cause with the many ethnic minority groups engaged in their own struggle against the central government in Rangoon. The largest number of Burmese students, nearly 7,500 at one point, went east to the Thai border, where they found help from the Karen, Mon, Karenni, and Pa-O minority groups. Perhaps 1,000 more crossed into Thailand, where the welcome was decidedly colder.

After flirting briefly with a policy to grant temporary asylum, Thai authorities instead opted first for a repatriation program, followed by a declaration that, as of March 31, 1989, all Burmese students in Thailand would be treated as illegal immigrants, subject to arrest and deportation.

Unable to cope with endemic malaria and other rigors of jungle life, many of the students on the border returned home or are hiding in Thailand. The student population on the border now stands at about 3,000, living in ten separate camps stretched along 700 miles of rugged mountainous terrain.

But despite the industry and high morale evident in the camps, the Burmese students express a growing sense of urgency and frustration. Pressed on one side

*Burma has just recently changed its name to the Union of Myanma, but in this article, we are using the more commonly known term.

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Students at Thay Baw Bo camp assemble to greet visitors. Conditions are spartan, food and medical supplies are insufficient, and the risk of Burmese army attack is ever-present. On July 1, the students opened a "jungle university" here, with classes in political science, animal husbandry, Thai and English language, and health.

Photo credit: USCR/Court Robinson

by Burmese army offensives, blocked on the other by an indifferent, and often hostile, Thai government, the students and their ethnic minority allies find their calls for help too often go unanswered.

Some aid is being provided, but it meets only about half the subsistence needs for food and medicine; asylum is precarious in Thailand and hard to come by anywhere else in the world; and arrest and persecution continue of student dissidents and minority groups in Burma.

"We asked for democracy and got only bullets," said one student. "Now we ask who is on our side for freedom. We worry that time will run out and the people will be crushed again."

Army Coup, Crackdown Sends Thousands to the Borders Last year, on July 23, Gen. Ne Win resigned after 26 years of authoritarian

rule. Simmering discontent had bubbled over in student-led demonstrations earlier in the year, with at least 40 people killed and dozens more injured or arrested by riot police.

On August 8, 1988, more than 100,000 people flouted the newly imposed martial law and took peacefully to the streets of Rangoon, calling for sweeping political and economic reform. They were answered with gunfire. The Burmese army cracked down on the nationwide demonstrations, killing between 1,000 and 3,000 people and arresting scores of others.

On September 18, Gen. Saw Maung, a protégé of Ne Win, seized power in a military coup, and the killings and arrests began anew. Foreign diplomats put the September death toll at over 1,000, and estimates by student groups marked it much higher.

Flight from the cities began immediate

after the coup. On September 20, Thai newspapers reported the arrival of 250 Burmese students in the border towns of Ranong and Mae Sot. That same day, Thai Foreign Minister Sitthi Savetsila, describing the students as "war refugees," said they would be granted temporary asylum in Thailand. "We cannot send them back right now because they would be killed," he said.

Within days, the Thai government appeared to back off from its asylum position, as the Burmese population in Ranong grew to 500. On September 22, a spokesman for the Foreign Ministry told reporters that the Thai government did not consider the Burmese to be refugees, but "temporarily displaced persons." The spokesman said that an offer of assistance from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had been rejected. Aid would instead be channelled through the Thai Red Cross.

Three days later, Ranong Governor Chalerm Yoopamorn announced that 107 Burmese had been detained for illegal entry and would be returned. On October 8, Thai authorities rounded up 135 Burmese students who had sought sanctuary in a Buddhist monastery near Mae Sot and trucked them across the border to the Karen military camp of Thay Baw Bo.

By mid-October, Burmese students on the border numbered nearly 7,500. Another 1,000 had taken refuge on the India border, and an estimated 2,000 had fled to the China border.

On October 17, the Burmese government announced it was opening 27 "reception centers" along Burma's borders and offered an amnesty to all students who returned home by November 18. Following the return of between 500 and 1,000 people in November, the government ultimately extended the deadline to January 31.

Amnesty International reported that some of the returning students allegedly "were either taken into custody and executed by army units or were shot and killed by soldiers who ambushed them in the forest." On November 19, nine students were arrested in the Burmese town of Kawthaung (also called Victoria Point) opposite Ranong. They were taken to a military camp where, allegedly, four were beheaded. The other five somehow managed to escape.

Thailand Presses Repatriation In Decem-

ber, the governments of Burma and Thailand agreed to establish a repatriation center at a military airfield outside the Thai city of Tak.

The reaction of the students was skeptical. "Some people may come in because of the lack of food and medicine in the jungle," Htun Aung Kyaw told the Bangkok Post, "but most will stay on despite the hardship."

Chairman of the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF), Htun Aung Kyaw said, "Gen. Chaowalit may have good intentions, but I doubt he knows the real situation in Burma. How will he feel when he learns that the people he sent back have been shot or hung?"

On January 18, the Burmese government invited 46 journalists for a three-day tour of Burma and a meeting with about 150 student returnees and their parents.

Interviewed in the presence of military officers and government officials, most of the students said they had not been mistreated since their return. But in private, according to the Far Eastern Economic Review, some said they had been forced to come back and feared for their safety. One handed a journalist a note that read: "We do think that if we give things as they really are, then just on the way back or afterwards we may be seized and beaten."

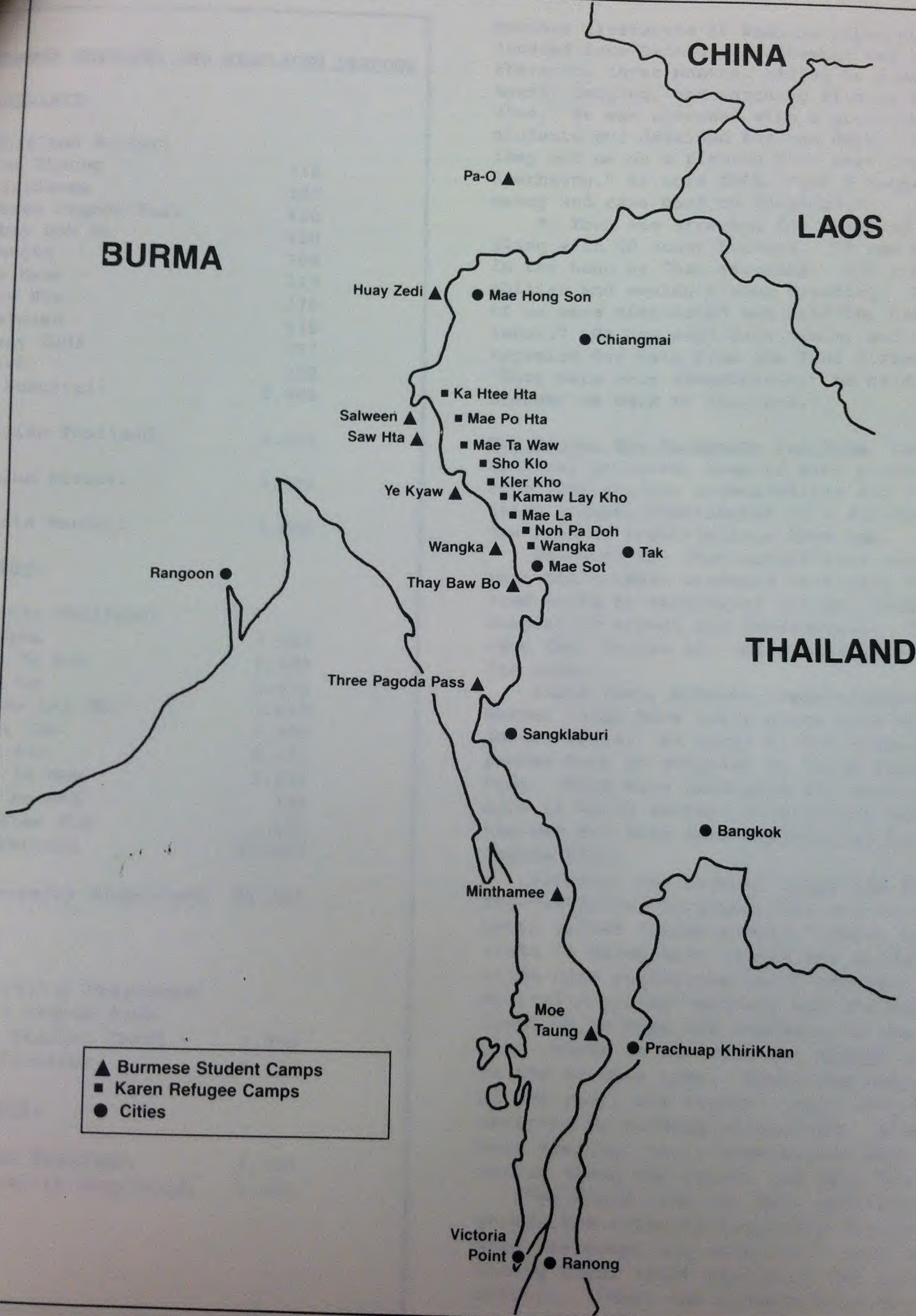
Despite statements of concern from UNHCR, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the State Department, the repatriation program continued. By late January, more than 300 students had been repatriated from Tak. Most of them, said Thant Myint U, relief coordinator for Emergency Relief Burma, had been arrested in the nearby town of Mae Sot and brought to Tak rather than being sent across the border to the student camps.

Forced repatriations were also being carried out from Ranong. Estimates provided by ABSDF suggest that, between October and January, perhaps 200 students were sent back to Victoria Point.

While most students were not handed over directly to Burmese authorities, the practice was still dangerous since, Thant said, "there is an army garrison stationed in Victoria Point, and student presence in town would immediately be known if a boat docked."

Ko Thet, a 25-year-old student of

Sites of Burmese Refugee and Displaced Persons Camps



- ▲ Burmese Student Camps
- Karen Refugee Camps
- Cities

BURMESE REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONSSTUDENTS:

Thailand Border:	
Moe Thaung	216
Minthamee	288
Three Pagoda Pass	400
Thay Baw Bo	450
Wangka	364
Ye Kyaw	229
Saw Hta	176
Salween	425
Huay Zedi	257
Pa-O	180
Subtotal:	2,985
Inside Thailand:	1,000
China Border:	2,000
India Border:	1,000

KAREN:

Inside Thailand:	
Wangka	3,021
Noh Pa Doh	1,465
Mae La	2,636
Kamaw Lay Kho	1,818
Kler Kho	1,696
Sho Klo	6,476
Mae Ta Waw	2,212
Mae Po Hta	326
Ka Htee Hta	393
Subtotal	20,043
Internally Displaced:	32,323

MON:

Internally Displaced:	
Three Pagoda Pass	
(Mon Student Camp)	1,300
Mon Territory	6,412

KARENNI:

Inside Thailand:	2,000
Internally Displaced:	4,000

Burmese literature at Rangoon University, crossed into Ranong in September and lived there for three months, hiding in a warehouse, begging, and catching fish to survive. He was arrested with a group of four students and detained for ten days. "Then they put me on a fishing boat back toward Kawthaung," he told USCR, "but I begged for mercy and came back to Thailand."

Ko Thet was arrested for a second time along with 60 other Burmese. "I was kicked in the head by Thai security. I'm a hemophiliac and couldn't stop bleeding. Many of us were mistreated and used for hard labor." He was sent back again, and again appealed for help from the Thai fishermen. "They were very sympathetic," he said, "and brought me back to Thailand."

Tak Closes But Pushbacks Continue International pressure, coupled with protests from Thai student organizations and religious groups, contributed to a slowdown in the rate of repatriations from Tak.

On March 31, Thai authorities announced that all Burmese students remaining in Thailand would be considered illegal immigrants, subject to arrest and deportation. That same day, direct air repatriations out of Tak ended.

Since then, however, repatriations to border camps have taken place on a much larger scale. On April 6, 117 students were pushed back at gunpoint at Three Pagoda Pass. Many were seriously ill with malaria. Late in April another 97 students living in the Mae Sot area were repatriated to Three Pagoda Pass.

Although the student camps are in minority-controlled territory and not in what is often called "Burma proper," there are many risks in being sent across the border. Aside from inadequate food, shelter, and medical supplies--malaria has claimed the lives of perhaps 100 students in the last year--there is the constant danger of attack by the Burmese army. Since the beginning of the year, six student camps have been attacked by Burmese offensives. Five have been overrun, their populations sent scattering along the border and into Thailand.

"We would like the Thai government to permit the students temporary evacuation when the camps are attacked," said Dr. Thaung Htun, ABSDF secretary for foreign affairs. "When the Burmese army retreats

and the situation is safe again, we will go back."

Thai authorities have permitted ABSDF to operate a small clinic in Mae Sot, which treats an average of 40 or 50 students per day, mostly for malaria. But in most cases, Burmese students who cross the Thai border, even if they are fleeing for their lives, must go into hiding or risk being sent back.

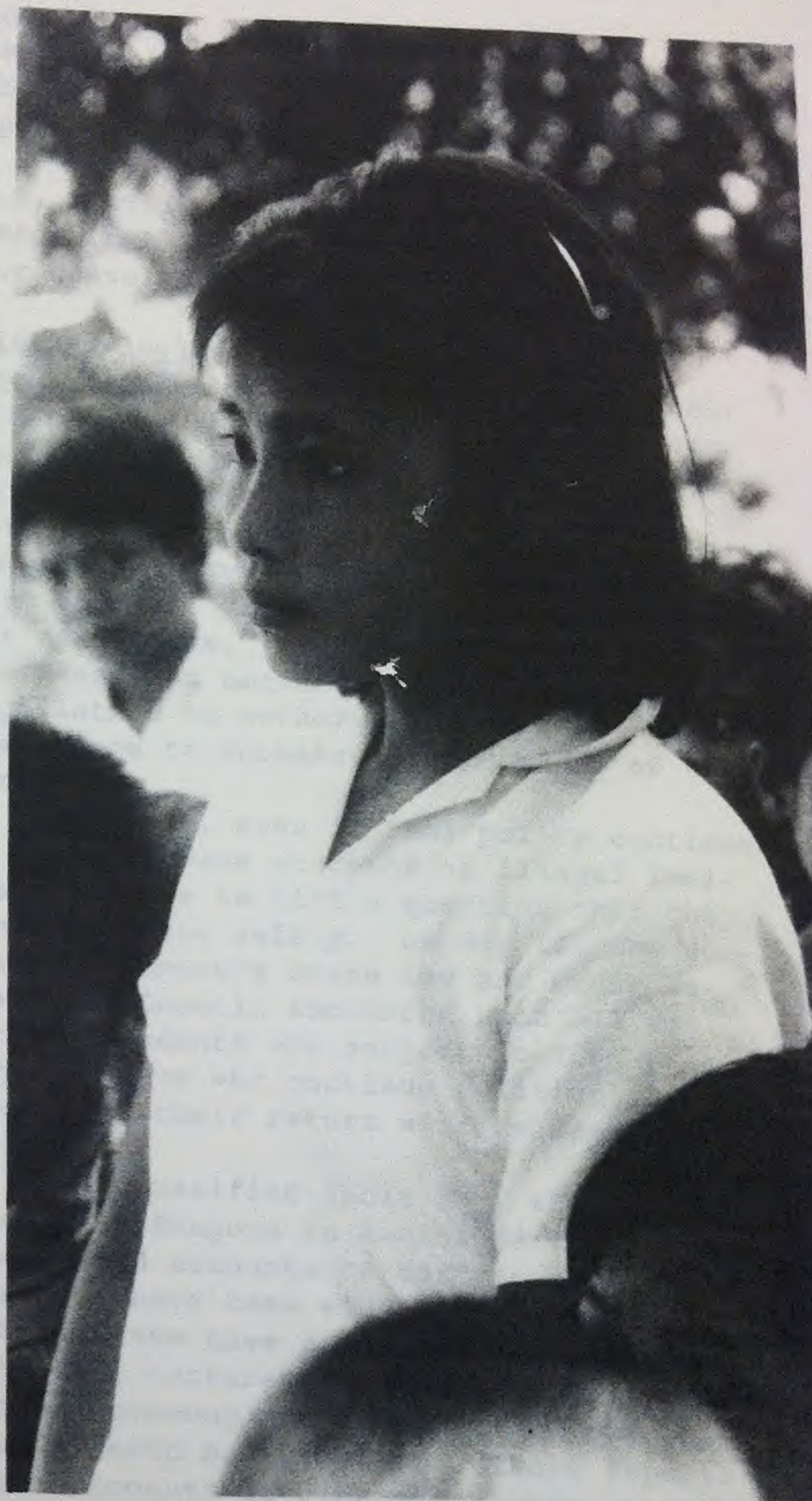
On May 13, for example, Burmese troops shelled Salween camp, forcing its 200 residents and the 175 residents of nearby Saw Hta camp to cross the river into Thailand. Fearful of approaching the local authorities, the groups lived in the jungle for about two weeks. Many became ill, and two people died, before the students felt it was safe to return to the Burmese side.

Cross-Border Aid Pulls Together From January to April, the student population on the border dropped from about 4,500 to about 3,000, as people found their own way home, were repatriated through Tak and Ranong, or slipped deeper into Thailand. Despite the reduced numbers, aid groups based in Thailand remained concerned at the erratic assistance that was being provided. In May, armed with about \$50,000 in initial pledges from international sources, several non-governmental relief groups organized the Burma Coordinating Group (BCG).

The ABSDF is responsible for monitoring distribution of food and medical supplies and identifying needs for the next month.

ABSDF leaders say that while the need for more food and medicine continues, BCG aid has helped to promote communication and better cooperation among the camps, and to provide incentives for setting priorities and managing resources.

But despite the welcome improvements that BCG has brought to the cross-border assistance effort, both the students and relief officials acknowledge that large questions loom just ahead: With current BCG funds exhausted in August, where will new contributions come from, and will they be sufficient to maintain even the present, inadequate level of aid? How much longer will the Thai government permit cross-border aid to continue, given its desire to maintain cordial relations with Rangoon? And what can be done to serve the equally needy refugee and displaced person populations now mostly beyond the reach of BCG assistance?



A Karen schoolgirl in Minthamee township. Almost one quarter of the children at her school had lost at least one parent in the 40-year war the Karen have waged with Rangoon.

Photo credit: USCR/Court Robinson

Tens of Thousands of Minorities Displaced by Burmese Army Persecution A British health worker in the Karen village of Minthamee told USCR, "It is too bad that so many people walk right through here to the student camp, then walk right through on their way back out again." To stop and listen is to hear the story of the Karen's

40-year struggle for autonomy, minority rights, and an end to military oppression. Minthamee is deep in Karen territory and has never been attacked by the Burmese army. But from villages closer to the center of the country emerge accounts of long-standing and widespread abuse. "They come into town, they say you are rebels, and they destroy," said one man, echoing the stories told by countless others. Men are killed or hauled off to serve as porters for the army, women are beaten and raped, children are orphaned, crops are seized and houses burned to the ground.

Burmese Students in Thailand Are Also Vulnerable All of the Burmese groups--students on the border, minorities displaced in Burma or encamped in Thailand--have special vulnerabilities but each can find some strength in numbers and organizational unity. The estimated 1,000 Burmese students in Thailand are not only scattered in a dozen towns and cities throughout the country, but are generally lacking a common focus or source of support.

Their options are stark and few. "They are on their own," said Thant, "and face the choice of either living in the jungle to face possible army attack, malaria and terrible living conditions or finding their way to Bangkok, risking arrest and detention and trying to survive without money or knowledge of the Thai language."

A UNHCR official told USCR that about 40 or 50 students had come into the agency's Bangkok offices in the last six months. In some cases, students have been given "mandate refugee status" in the form of a letter which states that the bearer has presented credible evidence of a well-founded fear of persecution in his or her country. The official said it was unclear whether the UNHCR letter had carried any weight with Thai authorities.

In February, three Burmese students in Thailand sought help at the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok, according to Thant, but were sent to UNHCR. In March and April, "We were told, in effect, that the United States did not have any policy for Burmese in Thailand," Thant said.

Since that time, the Embassy has developed a policy of sorts. In early August, U.S. refugee official told USCR that Burmese students have been issued "one or two"

nonimmigrant visas and "only in extraordinary cases," parole. In July and August, the Immigration and Naturalization Service approved three Burmese cases for parole.

"At this point," the official said, "the U.S. envisions no refugee program for Burmese," but indicated that UNHCR has asked for consultations on the issue.

Aid and Asylum Remain the Most Urgent Needs

Although the future of cross-border aid remains very uncertain, there are some encouraging signs. Several relief agencies in Thailand, previously not involved on the border, have expressed interest in providing humanitarian support. U.S. officials confirm they are discussing possible options for assistance. And each house of Congress has passed an amendment to foreign affairs legislation to authorize humanitarian assistance to Burmese on both sides of the border.

Meanwhile, even if Thai policy continues to treat Burmese students as illegal immigrants, there is little question that they cannot go home safely. On May 18, the Burmese government's State Law and Order Restoration Council announced that all returning students are subject to long prison terms. Those who continue political activities after their return will be sentenced to death.

An unclassified cable from the U.S. Embassy in Rangoon in August said, "Although unconfirmed accounts of torture of political prisoners have been widely circulated for weeks, we now have credible, first-hand reports that torture, beatings, and mistreatment are commonplace and that in some instances death has resulted. These reports relate accounts of cigarette burns, beatings resulting in severe eye and ear injuries, and electric shocks to the genitals."

The cable also said that the Burmese army continues to seize people around the country for porter duty. The cable recounted one incident "in which about 500 men, whom the eyewitness judged from appearance to be of the educated class, but older than students, were crowded into a central area before being taken away for porter duty in Kachin State. The men were tied together, some naked, others in their underwear, and were taunted by soldiers shouting, 'You were yelling for democracy last year. Why aren't you yelling now?'"

Update

° On July 31, representatives from the United States and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam announced that they had signed a draft agreement to permit the legal emigration of released reeducation camp prisoners and their close family members. The two sides expressed hope that a first group of 3,000 people would depart Vietnam before the end of 1989.

The resettlement program for reeducation camp prisoners would be in addition to the existing Amerasian and orderly departure programs, according to the State Department press announcement.

The U.S. delegation was led by Senior Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Robert L. Funseth. The Vietnamese delegation was led by Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs Vu Khoan.

In a separate statement, Funseth urged Vietnam to issue more exit permits to people eligible for U.S. immigrant visas. He said that Vietnam has an annual quota of 20,000 immigrant visas, but this year only about 8,000 of those visas will be used.

° A final review of more than 10,000 Cambodians in Khao I Dang who previously had been denied resettlement in the United States was completed on May 31. According to the International Rescue Committee (IRC), which serves as Joint Voluntary Agency (JVA) in Thailand, all 11,319 previously denied Cambodians were re-interviewed by JVA staff. Of these, the Ethnic Affairs Office in the Department of State recommended that 3,036 should be re-presented to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). INS over-turned the denials of 1,923, or about 24 percent, of rejected Cambodians, sustained 724 of the original denials, and deferred 61.

INS and the Department of State had reached an agreement in August 1988 to take a last look at the denied Cambodian caseload in Khao I Dang, following persistent criticism from refugee advocacy and human rights groups that many of the original denials had been the result of inconsistent and sometimes arbitrary processing guidelines used by the Ethnic Affairs Office and INS.

"While the results may not please everyone," said Bob DeVecchi, IRC executive director, "they do represent, in my view, the fruits of hard labor, collaborative efforts and a genuine desire on the part of all concerned to do a thorough and professional job."

° In July, Thai authorities rounded up more than 1,400 lowland Lao living in Thailand and sent them to the Nong Saeng detention center outside of Nakhorn Phanom to be screened for refugee status. International refugee officials say that most of the Lao had been involved in some capacity with resistance efforts directed against the socialist government in Vientiane.

Many of the Lao originally had lived in Na Pho or other refugee camps in Thailand but, some time during the last 14 years, moved out into nearby towns and villages to engage in "irregular activities," a UN official said. He estimated that the round-up ultimately could encompass up to 10,000 people in all. "I think the government will start with the lowland Lao resistance first, and then do the highland Lao," he said.

Observers suggest that a deal was struck last April between the Thai and Lao military to the effect that, as a gesture to improve bilateral relations, Thailand would rein in Laotian resistance activity.

Virtually all of those recently rounded up would likely be screened in as refugees and transferred to Na Pho, where they would be eligible to seek resettlement in another country, the official predicted. He did have two concerns about the group, however.

"These are people who voluntarily have opted out of the refugee process and settled in Thailand," he said. "They are not asylum seekers and should not be forced to become so."

Second, the official worried that the presence of large numbers of resistance supporters in Nong Saeng and Na Pho could have a disruptive influence on the voluntary repatriation effort. Of the 14,600 residents of Na Pho, about 500 have signed up to return to Laos and 100 new cases are registering every month, the official said.

Since March, about 150 people, mostly lowland Lao, have returned home voluntarily each month, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

rioting broke out during the weekend of August 26 on Tai Ah Chau Island, where the Hong Kong government has impounded more than 5,000 boat people, according to the August 31 Washington Post.

Using iron bars and makeshift weapons, up to 2,000 Vietnamese reportedly attacked police who distribute food rations, injuring at least 23. While police regained control, the Post said that police and refugee workers called the violence inevitable, "given the squalid conditions on Tai Ah Chau and the frustration of many of the Vietnamese--who have spent their life savings to flee to the West, only to find themselves in virtual captivity in Hong Kong."

The Post said the Hong Kong government confirmed three cases of cholera among the Vietnamese.

"They are being confined in intolerable conditions that encourage violence," Chris Bale, director of Oxfam Hong Kong, told the Post. "All of that creates a powder-keg situation, and we simply have not got the uniformed personnel to control it."

° Rev. Peter Pond, a tireless advocate on behalf of Cambodian refugees, was shot and wounded in the leg on June 23 as he tried to intervene on behalf of Cambodian refugees at Site 8, a Khmer Rouge-controlled camp.

° On July 28, the House Judiciary Committee approved the Moakley/DeConcini bill, H.R. 45, by a vote of 20 to 14. H.R. 45, the Central American Temporary Relief Act of 1989, would temporarily suspend the detention and deportation of Salvadorans and Nicaraguans from the United States (see Refugee Reports, Vol. X, No. 6). The bill is now pending before the House Rules Committee, and floor action is expected in September. In 1987, the House approved a safe haven bill for Salvadorans and Nicaraguans by a 237-181 margin.

On the Senate side, the DeConcini bill, S. 458, is scheduled for the full Judiciary Committee on September 21.

° Perry Rivkind has resigned as INS district director in Miami. Rivkind came to national prominence in May 1986 when he announced unilaterally that he would not deport Nicaraguans from his district because he believed they might be subjected to persecution upon return.

° Nine Contra leaders applied for political asylum in the United States shortly after Central American presidents signed the Tela Agreement, calling for the demobilization of the Contra forces in Honduras. The Tela Agreement calls for the demobilization of the Contras by December 5 and their repatriation to Nicaragua or relocation to unspecified third countries.

Three of the asylum requests were granted immediately by the INS, and the remaining were being processed "as quickly as possible," the August 11 Washington Post cited INS figures as saying.

° Settlement was reached June 30 on a class action suit brought on behalf of Haitian detainees at the Krome facility in Florida who had been transferred in May to remote locations in Texas and Louisiana. Under the terms of the agreement, the INS agreed to transfer the detainees back to Miami. About 200 Haitians were affected by the lawsuit. Cheryl Little, attorney for the Haitian Refugee Center, which brought the suit, said, "It appears that they will be sending more people out to Texas and Louisiana to make room for those they are returning to Krome."

° Rudolf Kuznetsov, the head of the Soviet visa agency, predicted that 200,000 Soviets would emigrate this year and that another two million would travel outside the country, as a result of an easing of travel restrictions.

The August 23 Washington Post reported a press conference in which Kuznetsov said that a draft law liberalizing Soviet travel is likely to be submitted to the Soviet legislature next month. Would-be emigres would still be required to receive invitations from friends, relatives, or prospective employers, according to the Post.

Projects and Programs

REFUGEES SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES THROUGH "REFUGEE VOICES"

Since February, radio listeners around the country have been able to hear refugees tell, in their own words, about the situations that caused them to flee their homes

Refugee Reports/August 31, 1989

FY 89 REFUGEE ARRIVALS BY STATE*
As of June 1989

STATE	YTD FY 89	STATE	YTD FY89
ALABAMA	65	NEW JERSEY	1,170
ALASKA	13	NEW MEXICO	112
ARIZONA	533	NEW YORK	11,509
ARKANSAS	86	NORTH CAROLINA	307
CALIFORNIA	21,545	NORTH DAKOTA	74
COLORADO	625	OHIO	630
CONNECTICUT	681	OKLAHOMA	172
DELAWARE	42	OREGON	930
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	326	PENNSYLVANIA	1,981
FLORIDA	2,955	RHODE ISLAND	329
GEORGIA	696	SOUTH CAROLINA	42
HAWAII	155	SOUTH DAKOTA	78
IDAHO	159	TENNESSEE	400
ILLINOIS	2,901	TEXAS	2,199
INDIANA	124	UTAH	316
IOWA	429	VERMONT	84
KANSAS	291	VIRGINIA	834
KENTUCKY	131	WASHINGTON	2,151
LOUISIANA	243	WEST VIRGINIA	8
MAINE	108	WISCONSIN	1,249
MARYLAND	1,151	WYOMING	22
MASSACHUSETTS	2,760	AMERICAN SAMOA	0
MICHIGAN	829	GUAM	0
MINNESOTA	1,925	JOHNSON ATOLL	0
MISSISSIPPI	64	NO. MARIANNA ISLANDS	0
MISSOURI	529	MIDWAY ISLANDS	0
MONTANA	44	PUERTO RICO	2
NEBRASKA	226	TRUST TERRITORIES	0
NEVADA	158	VIRGIN ISLANDS	0
NEW HAMPSHIRE	129	WAKE ISLANDS	0
		UNKNOWN	13
		TOTAL YTD FY 89	64,535

* This report is based on documents from the Refugee (formerly ACVA) Data Center, ICM, and other federal agencies available on the above date and may not include information on all refugees in the categories reported.
Source: Office of Refugee Resettlement.

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States. The ideals of federalism and autonomy that animate the tribal groups do not permit the centralization of power that is characteristic of a communist front, and there is no group among the tribes with the ability to impose such centralization.

Burma's last leftist force, the BCP, was founded in the 1930s and supported by the Chinese for more than a generation. At one time it was the best armed and disciplined force in rural Burma. Contact between the BCP and each hill tribe was inevitable, and all the tribes have long histories of ragged relations with the BCP. The BCP was unsuccessful in demanding central control and discipline over all alliances it entered. Although Burma's tribal situation seemed an ideal opportunity for forceful central authority, in the end the BCP lost its tribal support because of the tribes' desire for autonomy and democracy and their mistrust of the communists. When the Wa finally pulled out of the BCP in March 1989, imprisoning the BCP leadership or chasing them into China, the party collapsed.

Reflecting the embassy's view that the tribal forces are leftist and primitive, Washington views the upland coalition as a hostile but insignificant power within Burma. The constant use of the adjective "tribal" is technically accurate but not borne out by reality. In fact, as one drives around Thai cities with tribal leaders in Mercedes Benzes or discusses the fine points of democratic constitutions with their political writers, the opposition leadership comes across as anything but primitive. Moreover, their numbers are not small. Although no valid census has been taken since the 1930s, the areas the NDF and DAB dominate are large and heavily populated, representing perhaps one-third of Burma's land area and 10 per cent of its estimated population of 40 million.

Four decades of conflict have also steeled a vigorous tribal leadership. The NDF and DAB exercise effective control and enjoy popular support over large regions outside the constantly shifting areas of guerrilla warfare. Karen and other military forces have survived for more than 40 years. Manerplaw, the Karen headquarters since 1974, NDF headquarters since 1976, and DAB headquarters since early

1989, has never been successfully attacked despite being a primary objective of Burmese Army attacks for many years.

The NDF has clearly achieved a strategic stalemate against the Burmese Army, which has some 170,000 soldiers. The NDF fields 20,000–25,000 troops—an army comparable in size to the Filipino New People's Army and much larger than the armed force of the Communist party of Thailand at its peak. This strategic stalemate has occurred despite the opposition's many problems—shortages of weapons, tribal feuds, difficulties of communication and cooperation with the urban opposition, and an inability to create a fully integrated army. Moreover, the current NDF force is about to be supplemented by a potential 25,000 Wa troops presently being organized into eight divisions. The Wa have enough weapons now to sustain combat against the regime for more than two years.

Never have so many groups been allied against the central government and never has the government been so divided and vulnerable. The Burmese Army still depends heavily on large contingents of tribal officers and on men whose loyalties cannot be taken for granted. Given the urban standoff between an alienated population and a disciplined army, the coalescing upland opposition holds the balance.

Thailand and the Burmese Struggle

Unfortunately for the Burmese opposition, elements of the Thai Army have become extensively involved in the civil war. It is a facet of the Burmese story little appreciated in the West, and one that risks the health of Thailand's fledgling democracy. Scores of interviews with senior Thai officials, Thai scholars, intelligence operatives, Western diplomats, missionaries, and leaders of all major Burmese tribal groups reveal that some senior Thai military officers have used Burmese warfare and drugs for personal enrichment and as part of a broad scheme to fund the eventual restoration of military predominance in Thailand. While there is debate about whether or not political goals are being muted in favor of personal financial benefits, little disagreement exists about the main thrust of Thai Army leaders' policies.

In December 1988 Thai Army Commander in Chief General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh concluded a deal with Saw Maung that led to the forcible repatriation of numerous Burmese student refugees, an opening of the Burmese border to Thai Army-controlled trade, and 20 logging concessions to Thai timber companies. Subsequently, the Thai Army has repeatedly allowed Burmese Army units into Thailand to outflank Karen insurgents and to attempt to end Karen resistance to contracts between the Thai Army and Rangoon (with values of up to \$2 billion) for teakwood previously controlled by the Karen. At the same time, sources in Thailand say that senior Thai Army officers threatened to cut off Karen supply lines if the Karen did not also provide the Thai Army with massive quantities of teak. Faced with resistance, the Thai Army closed the border to most hill tribe trade and imposed the death penalty for trade in weapons.

Chavalit's policies have become bitterly controversial within Thailand. After a Burmese troop incursion on May 20, 1989, that was facilitated by the Thai Army, Thailand's civilian government bitterly protested the border violation. In early July hundreds of Burmese troops again penetrated 4-6 kilometers inside Thailand and seized a village.

Meanwhile, senior officers in the Thai Army have also allied themselves with the Burmese drug lord Khun Sa. The constant stream of Thai Army liaison officers to Khun Sa's jungle headquarters in Burma could only be authorized by very powerful figures in the Thai military. Meanwhile, in northern Thailand, Khun Sa enforces his regional monopoly on trade in Burmese jade from a gem trading center with high pink walls topped by shards of glass in Chiang Mai—a few miles away from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's regional drug fighting center. Northern Thailand, especially Chiang Mai, also serves as Khun Sa's business, communications, and logistics center. Teak logs move freely from Khun Sa's area to fulfill the contracts negotiated by Chavalit, and a Thai company is building a road into Khun Sa's area even as the Thai Army has closed the border to the Karen. Thus, while units loyal to Saw Maung and Khun Sa jointly attack the

NDF and the Wa, Thai Army units strangle the NDF food and arms supply in order to achieve mutual business objectives.

In interviews senior Thai government officials confirm Chavalit's actions; they characterize Thai Army policy toward Indochina as driven exclusively by commercial considerations. Still, Burmese guerrilla sources relate that many Thai Army units are now giving only lip service to Chavalit's orders regarding the Burmese. Thailand's Interior Minister, Major General Pramarn Adireksarn, has ordered the powerful Border Patrol Police to repel Burmese incursions even while Chavalit was encouraging them. These dissensions threaten Thai unity.

Chavalit's border policies have worsened the already severe civil-military tensions in Thailand. Public opinion and the press overwhelmingly oppose his alliance with Saw Maung. Full-fledged Thai democracy is only a little over one year old, and Chavalit and other top officers openly resent the decline of military influence. Chavalit has repeatedly threatened coups and suggested that the civilian government is so flawed that the military must do something. He has demanded a vaguely defined agrarian revolution. Many Thais see the hand of Chavalit behind recent strikes that embarrassed the government.

The foreign policy centerpiece of the civilian government, articulated by Thai Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan and his young advisers—most notably Sukhumbhand Paribatra—is a wise and far-reaching strategy of peace through mutual prosperity with Burma and Indochina. They envision Thailand as the magnanimous leader of mainland Southeast Asia, ensuring peace through mutually beneficial economic ties—the extension to Thailand's neighbors of the conditions that have made most of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) states so peaceful and productive. The architects of this policy have grown increasingly outspoken against Chavalit for using the government as an excuse to depredate Thailand's neighbors. They argue that the Thai Army has become a rogue army, deliberately deluding Bangkok about its activities. In early August, as pressures against Chatichai's

FOREIGN POLICY

government mounted, Chavalit suggested that civilian corruption was so great that the military perhaps should do something about it. Sukhumbhand, at that time still official foreign policy adviser to the prime minister, responded that perhaps the military also had some cleaning up to do. On August 7, 1,000 soldiers of ranks up to lieutenant general gathered in Bangkok to demand Sukhumbhand's resignation and successfully forced him out. Fragile Thai democracy and its foreign policies are being severely challenged.

The United States, while making feeble gestures against the drug trade, has inadvertently supported the maintenance of a system that makes its continuation inevitable.

American ties to Khun Sa's Thai Army allies cast a strange shadow on the U.S. policy of isolating the upland Burmese democratic movement, including the drug-free Karen, on the grounds that the United States will not work with drug dealers. American policy in Burma and Thailand has had three ostensible goals: to diminish drug traffic, improve human rights and democracy, and enhance regional peace. But the new regional situation has evolved rapidly and old policies no longer advance these goals. Indeed, the policies have become self-defeating. A successful U.S. drug policy cannot deal with Khun Sa's allies in Rangoon and maintain intimate ties with his allies in the Thai Army while hypocritically refusing to talk with his greatest opponent, the NDF. Likewise, a successful human rights policy cannot isolate the only force, the DAB, that might give a peaceful urban opposition a chance against a repressive, Leninist-style government in Rangoon.

In Thailand, U.S. policy cannot continue to push to the wall the most successful Thai democracy of this century over less critical disputes such as those of intellectual property rights, while ignoring the drug connections and border depredations of Thai Army officers who seek to bring down that democracy. U.S.

Thai military cooperation, which is certainly vital for regional security, can survive a confrontation with a clique of senior officers over drug trafficking. Regional peace and prosperity would be better served by Prime Minister Chatchai's stated policy without the interference of General Chavalit and his allies. The United States needs to rethink the manner in which its money and guns flow to a corrupt, antidemocratic military clique.

Any solution to the Burmese drug problem will take a generation. But with Washington investing so much money and prestige in the War on Drugs, and its drug suppression efforts in Burma and Thailand such a failure, it needs to consider a strategy that promises improvement over the long run. In Burma, the prerequisites for progress on drugs are to reshape the internal economy and end the civil war. These require no less than the replacement of a government that refuses to compromise. The regime's vulnerability lies in its need to divide the urban and upland oppositions to prevent government forces from being dispersed and nibbled to death. This vulnerability constitutes an important lever for the United States.

The United States and its allies should seize this opportunity and begin talking with the upland opposition. U.S. recognition would stimulate the morale of the Burmese opposition forces as it has the morale of opposition forces in China and the Soviet Union over the years. The current policy of deliberately isolating the rural democratic opposition is an extraordinary anomaly. By developing a relationship with the DAB leadership, the United States could help the DAB consolidate upland unity. U.S. and other diplomats in Burma should become active communication channels between upland and lowland political groups. Washington's role would not be to orchestrate but to facilitate this dialogue.

The United States and other Western countries should also publicly emphasize the fatal flaws in the national election the regime has planned for May 1990. A government ban forbids more than four individuals from assembling at one time. While there are more than 200 political parties—about 30 associated with Saw Maung and a large number associated with

the military — most were formed in order to get the telephone and travel privileges and the special rations of fuel that come with official recognition of a political party. The military ruthlessly harasses those parties formed on the basis of political principle. In April 1989 it nearly assassinated Aung San Suu Kyi and in July it placed her and fellow opposition leader Tin Oo under house arrest. The government has excluded from participation all expatriate Burmese and all Burmese "associated with armed groups," a euphemism for banning virtually all minorities. Finally, the military regime insists on its right to retain power until the newly elected national assembly can draft a new constitution and form a civilian government. That is an open-ended, manipulable license to remain in power. The United States should encourage the world community to insist that political parties be allowed to form freely and that urban and upland groups be allowed to communicate and form organizations. Otherwise, the elections will be a total sham.

Equally important, the United States should demand that the Thai Army reopen the border to NDF trade and close it to Khun Sa. A relatively open Thai border will immediately create access to markets that would take a generation to create inside Burma. It will not damage the Thai economy; in fact the Thais will immensely benefit from it. An open border will secure the lifelines that make it possible for the Karen to survive with their antidrug policy. It will create conditions necessary for other groups to begin weaning themselves away from drugs. Above all, an open border will terminate the economic squeeze that hampers the DAB's opposition to Rangoon. This U.S. policy would garner extremely broad public support within Thailand from supporters of democracy, opponents of drugs, and opponents of an alliance with Saw Maung.

Burma's political structure is so fragile that such policies, if carefully coordinated with Western and ASEAN states, can eventually bring down the regime. Helping the opposition organize while the center is disintegrating is more effective than sending guns. Urban-rural collaboration is the central strategic issue. The Philippine revolution, which was based exclu-

sively on urban demonstrations, cannot be duplicated in Burma, where the army is willing to massacre demonstrators. Progress will be slow, but faster results can come if economic aid is funneled to tribal groups through the DAB. Such aid could encourage the replacement of opium with other crops and promote small mining ventures. Most tribal groups would welcome U.S. observers and development specialists to monitor the progress of drug conversion programs developed under these circumstances. In this region of severe poverty and extensive natural and human resources, relatively small expenditures could produce disproportionate economic and political benefits. China need not be alarmed if Washington rigorously eschews military assistance and focuses on economic development for the Burmese opposition. In fact, China is ahead of the United States in dealing with the united opposition. According to rebel sources, it has already discussed major arms deals with NDF forces.

What follows will not be smooth or easy. The Burmese opposition will face greater obstacles in organizing an effective government than the Filipinos have. But with a change in U.S. policy, there will be hope in a country where there has been none for 27 years. Today, few Burmese would dare dream of such an achievement.

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Myanmar's Military Government Forces Thousands to Move From Capital



By Keith B. Robbins
Washington Post Staff Writer

BANGKOK—The military rulers of Myanmar, formerly Burma, have recently removed thousands of people from the capital city this year to "resettlement areas" in the barren countryside, according to diplomats who have witnessed the relocations. Some of the diplomats, who were by telephone in Yangon, formerly Rangoon, said the forced removals—officially part of a three-year-old resettlement program—are aimed at breaking up potential opposition, political strongholds and religious demonstrations. The strategy, such as the one reported in the summer of 1988 and repeated in the summer of 1989, has brought the government to the edge of collapse before being crushed by the army.

While many of the people targeted for relocation are classified as "squatters," most have been living in the same houses for the past 30 or 40 years, the diplomats said. Many of the poor neighborhoods being affected by the program are in the same areas in which people turned out in large numbers in the 1988 anti-government protests and the subsequent National League for Democracy's belief that they had won support, they said. In some sections of Yangon, entire neighborhoods are being uprooted, the diplomats said. The targeted areas have been given 48 hours to leave. In other neighborhoods, people have been given 10 days to leave. Many have been taken to locations up to 70 miles outside of the city. "It's being done in a fairly brutal fashion," a diplomat said. The areas where the people are being taken are said to lack water, electricity and other public services, and people moved there often have no way to commute to their jobs in the city. About 160,000 people have been targeted nationwide for forced removal from the cities, it is believed, according to diplomats. Under the government's plan, residents have to surrender the situation and they are not allowed to return. The government has said that it is not interested in a free and fair election, but it is interested in a new political opposition by arresting some of its top leaders and trying to break its base of popular support before national elections scheduled for May 27.

While many diplomats said the elections will likely be held as scheduled, few believe they will be anything like the "free and fair" balloting that the government promised when it staged a bloody crackdown in September 1988 to end the demonstrations for democracy. The government recently said it would refuse to allow a U.S. observer delegation into Myanmar to witness the elections. An official statement in a government-controlled newspaper, the

Working People's Daily, criticized Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.), who proposed an observer mission, for having "slandered our country with prejudice." It accused another U.S. congressman critical of the regime, Rep. Stephen Solarz (D-N.Y.), of "interfering in the internal affairs" of Myanmar. The article appeared to carry a veiled threat that relations between the United States and Myanmar already at a low point with virtually no official business, would be further damaged by the critics' statements from American lawmakers. The spokesman in Yangon "has gotten angry, such words," said one Western diplomat. "There's no opposition left, everybody who means anything is in jail." While the military government has allowed the formation of many political parties in recent months, the National League for Democracy, the most popular opposition grouping, has clearly been targeted for official harassment. Its chairman, Tin Oun, has been sentenced to three years of hard labor for sedition, but his brother, Aung San Suu Kyi, has been held virtually continuously under house arrest, for protests in Yangon. Recently, a government contract was awarded to Yangon Kyi would be ineligible to run for election, according to government law. The decision has never been officially announced in Yangon. Apparently, during a popular backlash and demonstrations as seen, spread of Sun Kyi's disaffection, the military earlier this month significantly stepped up its profile in Yangon, moving heavily armed troops to key locations in the downtown area. Diplomats reported seeing two armored personnel carriers in the center of the city near the U.S. Embassy, which became a focal point for many demonstrations in 1988. At other points in the city, soldiers were said to be standing guard with fixed bayonets. Diplomats said small groups of students have recently attempted to stage rallies, but these have been quickly dispersed by troops. The government administration was said to

25% TO 30% OFF

FURNITURE ON SALE

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Exploration programs stirring in Myanmar

G. Alan Petzet
Senior Staff Writer

Myanmar has issued licenses for all tracts in its first onshore licensing round, received bids for second round tracts, and is expected to invite bids for improved production in existing fields.

Foreign oil companies last operated onshore in Myanmar, formerly Burma, in 1962.

The government also plans to license offshore acreage and is evaluating bids for at least three tracts.

Myanmar since October

Myanmar's main fields, production

Field	Year discovered	Cumulative		Production		Present	
		Oil	Gas	Oil	Gas	Oil	Gas
Mann	1960	19	—	6,800	6	—	—
Hauksfjorden	1960	88	—	4,900	7	—	—
Chauklanywe	1962	128	10	700	12	—	—
Yenangyung	1960	182	—	2,500	2	—	—
Avadaw	1910	1	10	—	10	—	—
Pyelo	1972	—	—	—	2	—	—
Prome	1965	7	—	300	5	—	—
Swepyine	1967	—	—	—	10	—	—
Myerung	1964	21	—	—	—	—	—
Total				15,200	54		

Source: Daniel Johnston & Co.

1989 has awarded 10 blocks, including one offshore, for which it received \$46 million

in signature bonuses (OGJ, Feb. 12, p. 29).

The licenses are expected

to result in a combined \$360 million work commitment during the first 3 years. Work commitments are \$12-70 million/block for the 3 year exploration period.

The first well in each block is to be spudded within 14-18 months of contract signing. The work programs for the 10 blocks include a total of 29 wells.

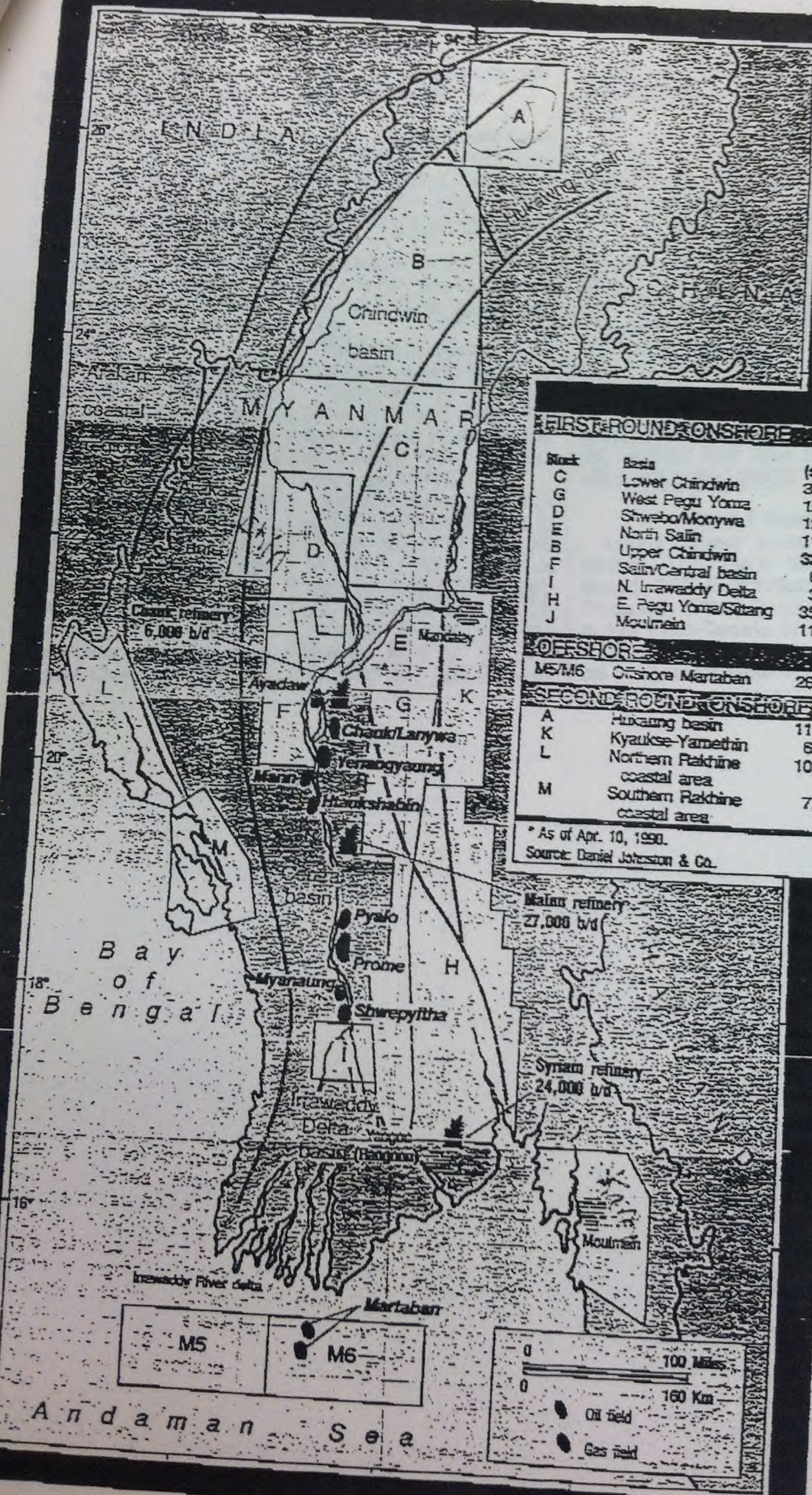
In all, 26 companies bid for onshore blocks in a round that closed May 8, 1989.

A unit of Idemitsu of Japan signed a contract to study the feasibility of developing Martaban gas fields, with re-

The oil and gas scene in Myanmar 96°

serves of 4.1 tcf.
Bidding closed Feb. 15, 1990, for other offshore blocks. Premier Oil Ltd. of the U.K. is understood to be negotiating a production sharing contract for blocks M15, M16, and M17 in the Andaman Sea off Teninsarim in extreme southern Myanmar.

After wrapup of the second onshore licensing round, the national oil company, Myanmar Oil & Gas Enterprise (MOGE), and the government's energy planning department plan to invite bids for improved production agreements. About 15 companies have approached the



FIRST ROUND ONSHORE

Block	Basin	Area (sq km)	Date signed	Company
C	Lower Chindwin	39,000	10-3-89	Yukong Oil Co.
G	West Pegu Yoma	19,280	10-27-89	Shell
D	Shwabo/Monywa	12,384	10-30-89	Idemitsu
E	North Salin	11,460	11-7-89	Petro-Canada
F	Upper Chindwin	32,780	11-10-89	Amoco
H	Salin/Central basin	6,200	11-13-89	Unocal
I	N. Inawaddy Delta	3,500	11-18-89	Croft-Clyde
J	E. Pegu Yoma/Sittoung	35,000	11-24-89	BHP
	Moulmein	11,000	1-23-90	Kidland

OFFSHORE

M5/M6	Offshore Martaban	26,140	2-16-90	Idemitsu
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SECOND ROUND ONSHORE

A	Hukawng basin	11,750
K	Kyaukse-Yamethin	6,650
L	Northern Rakhine coastal area	10,100
M	Southern Rakhine coastal area	7,800

* As of Apr. 10, 1990.

Source: Daniel Johnston & Co.

government to discuss the potential of secondary recovery and development of deeper prospective zones in existing fields.

Prospects fertile

Myanmar's production has dropped to less than 15,000 b/d of oil from twice that volume in 1982.

The state oil company's production averaged 14,713 b/d of oil and 103.5 MMcf of gas in 1989, said Dr. Aung Khin, a Singapore consultant who was managing director and chairman of a MOGE predecessor during 1968-75.

The industry response to the licensing offers results from good geological potential, relatively favorable fiscal terms, and encouragement toward industry from the Ministry of Energy.

said Daniel Johnston, president of Daniel Johnston & Co., Dallas consulting firm.

The Myanmar tertiary geosyncline covers about 140,000 sq miles, of which 111,000 sq miles could be considered to have hydrocarbon potential, Johnston said.

Exploration in Myanmar is characterized mainly by strong structural elements, multiple pay sands, and shallow depths.

Many fields were discovered based on surface features, several contain five to 40 pay sands, and average producing depth is about 4,000 ft.

The potential for large discoveries is probably greatest in the Central basin (Salin basin) and southern Chindwin basin, Johnston said.

Almost all production in Myanmar is from Oligocene and lower Miocene sandstones. Crudes are often high

in paraffin content with pour points of 80-100° F.

General license terms

Myanmar's production sharing contract provides for an initial exploration period of 3 years and two 1 year extensions.

Minimum work commitment is 500 line km of seismic and three exploratory wells.

Production period is 25 years with a 10% royalty.

Corporate income tax, 30%, is waived during the first 3 years of commercial production. Cost recovery maximum is 40%.

MOGE's share of profit oil

is 65% at production rates to 30,000 b/d of oil and 180 MMcfd of gas, 70% at 30,001-50,000 b/d and 181-300 MMcfd, 80% at 50,001-100,000 b/d at 301-600 MMcfd, 85% at 100,001-150,000 b/d and 601-800

MMcfd, and 90% at more than 150,000 b/d and 900 MMcfd.

Signature bonus varies from \$5-7 million/block. Discovery bonus is \$1 million.

Production bonuses are \$2 million upon reaching 10,000 b/d, \$3 million at 30,000 b/d, \$4 million at 50,000 b/d, \$5 million at 100,000 b/d, and \$10 million at 200,000 b/d.

Domestic obligation crude is priced at 60% of the international market price, payable in kyats.

The contractor is required to relinquish at least 25% of the contract area after the initial exploration period.

Block F interests

Among recent acreage trades, Thailand's state owned PTT Exploration & Production (PTTEP) is poised to join Petro-Canada to become a coventurer with Unocal in Myanmar Block F.

PTTEP management has tentatively endorsed the planned venture with Unocal Myanmar, and the Thai company is seeking final approval from its parent Petroleum Authority of Thailand (PTT) for the farmout, which is to be its first petroleum exploration venture outside Thailand.

Petro-Canada, which operates Block E, and Unocal, operator of Block F, traded 30% interests in the two tracts with each other. PTTEP plans to take a 10% interest in Block F, for which it will make an initial \$1.6 million contribution.

Unocal said Block F, in the Salin basin, is largely unexplored and has significant hydrocarbon potential.

Unocal Myanmar committed to conduct 2,000 line km of seismic surveys and drill four wells in the initial 3 year exploration period, spending at least \$29 million.

Implementing people's mandate

Zali Maw argues that the National League for Democracy, because of its overwhelming victory in the May 27 election, must implement its mandate to restore democracy to Burma. *The Nation*, July 10, 1990

Following their resounding electoral mandate to the National League for Democracy (NLD), the people are viewing with mounting revulsion the evasions by the State Law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc) in relinquishing state power. The people, legitimately expecting the prospect of reclaiming the right to control their own destiny, insist upon a democratic and constitutional government immediately.

Slorc had decreed heavily circumscribed elections and was certain that, after its absolute rule that preceded the elections combined with the culture of repression, there would be a muddled vote. With the democracy movement disorganized and badly split, Slorc would be able to dominate any post-election government. The avalanche of NLD votes upset all these calculations. The situation itself has not changed. Nothing has happened, only the whole psychology of the country has changed. The repressive structure is still in place, but democracy is on people's minds in a way it never was before. There has been a change in perceptions.

De Tocqueville once described elections as an institutionalized revolution. If any elections fit that description, ours did. It was an explosion of hatred as much as of hope and desire.

But the people were pragmatic enough to wait and adjust to political reality. There was an understanding among the people that they all felt and thought the same way. They understood that collectively they could be a body politic. They did not only make the natural response but the correct political response as well in giving a sweeping mandate for democracy.

This avalanche of support for the NLD has cut dead any argument over whether a workable third option exists between an elected democratic government and absolute military rule. There is no longer any doubt. For what the people have already achieved by their response, no one will be able to take that away. It is already recorded that they repudiated the politics of repres-

sion and brute force.

The people are now asking whose purpose has this electoral exercise served? The answer ought to be the purpose of democracy and justice. It is an issue now of how the future development of democratic constitutional rule could best be secured—but cautiously refraining from its full exercise at this delicate juncture, or by boldly insisting upon it. Our politics have now passed through a historic watershed. It may well become more dramatic in the period ahead. The forces that have governed politics have now been permanently altered, and to proceed as if a change has not occurred would ultimately be self-defeating for our democracy movement.

Proclaiming the mandate

The time for proclamation is now. Implementation may extend over months, as circumstances warrant. But the proclamation of the legitimate government should not be precluded by any other issues. If we wait, we shall lose. If the elected national assembly does not move forward, democracy shall lose. There is a momentum to events. There is no more point to arguing whether or not a legitimate government should assume full state authority. It has become inevitable. The issue is how and when.

Once the NLD has defined its objectives clearly, policy decisions should be implemented in quantum leaps. In the present circumstances, there are expectations that the elected assembly should implement a political quantum leap. A policy of small steps in the proper direction would lose momentum and impact. The gradual approach is no longer credible and would fail to get the entire political system moving. The establishment of the authority of the elected national assembly cannot make any progress in small steps, waiting for the democratic process to unfold as decreed by the Slorc.

The basic quantum leap that should be made is the immediate convening of

the elected national assembly. In successive assembly sessions, the following resolutions, among others, should be adopted: the immediate restoration of the independence constitution of 1947; nomination of a prime minister; the prime minister's nomination of cabinet ministers; nomination of a constitutional revision committee.

It is imperative that the national assembly immediately declare the restoration of our constitution and the formation of a legitimate government. On one hand there are those who view a declaration of a legitimate government as an unnecessary confrontation. However, such a declaration would be a clear statement of the total public support for the legitimate government which would focus the attention of the country on the Slorc and its transparent illegality and evasions.

The correct response of the parliamentary NLD party should be a declaration of its legitimate government. Not only would this give the NLD clear-cut legitimacy, but also provide non-violent options. Public support and concern would become fixed and focused, and a clear signal would be sent to the international community.

This issue needs to be understood. It transcends the legal niceties over the requirement of the declaration of a legitimate government. It even transcends the political value of such a declaration. The requirement is rooted in the principle of the sovereignty of the people and the supremacy of the elected national assembly.

Further, such a declaration makes the struggle for democracy a shared responsibility of both the legitimate government and the people. Without such a declaration, the elected assembly will be caught on the horns of a dilemma. A legitimate government will have been nominated by the elected assembly and empowered by the people. Its legitimacy cannot be challenged by any power.

But in the absence of a formal declaration the legality of actions by elected representatives can be ques-

tioned by Slorc and various other sectors and also by the international community.

The issue to be resolved is the proper locus of authority for exercising the functions of government. The people have legitimately shown by their electoral response that their elected representatives are properly empowered to nominate a legitimate government.

Useless or meaningful?

Such a formal declaration may be criticized as a useless piece of paper. However, formal documents have value and legitimize the authority in the eyes of the country and the rest of the world. It focuses attention and accepts constitutional responsibilities. While it cannot guarantee the assumption of state authority, this legal form shall be of immeasurable value to the nation.

A declaration will bring with it the tacit determination to use all proper means to establish the legitimacy of the NLD. It is to proclaim a juridically altered relationship and to authorize such action as is deemed appropriate. It is seizing the legal and moral commanding heights of the nation and keeping its legitimacy in very plain view.

In delaying to make this declaration the parliamentary NLD party could fail to mobilize the national will and the strength of a people united for democracy. Instead of the passions of the people strengthening and supporting the legitimate government, adversaries will exploit this confusion.

A serious country should have a serious government. It must have a government that its people, elite groups and the international community accept as legitimate.

U Zali Maw is a barrister-at-law and the son of late Prime Minister Dr Ba Maw of pre-independence Burma. The writer is executive vice-president of the Alliance for Democratic Solidarity, Union of Burma. He contributed this article to The Nation.

Burmese dissidents:

Tough military line may trigger violence

United Press International

Chiang Mai

BURMESE dissident leaders said yesterday that a tough policy outlined by the military intelligence chief showed the military junta would not yield power peacefully to the newly elected legislature.

"This headline policy is frustrating the people and now it means that anything could happen," said Tin Maung Win, the general secretary of the Democratic Alliance of Burma, a coalition of ethnic insurgents, dissident students and exiled politicians. He spoke at a secret location in the northern Thai province of Chiang Mai

which borders Burma.

The Alliance leader said the speech by Brig Gen Khin Nyunt, secretary of the ruling junta and chief of military intelligence, broadcast on Friday, indicated there would be no transfer of power and no release of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Khin Nyunt said the 44-year-old Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the National League for Democracy which swept the May 27 elections, was already being treated leniently because she was under house arrest instead of being imprisoned like many other political leaders.

He rejected calls from foreign

governments for her release and warned the elected legislature the military would not tolerate any attempt to set up a government without military approval.

"In the history of Burmese politics I have never heard a leader deliver a speech like this. He sounded like a gangster bullying the people," said Aye Saung, secretary of the Alliance. He said the elected legislators would have difficulty drawing up a constitution while under the control of the military government.

"Now the people know once and for all that there will be no smooth transfer of power and will use all means possible to overthrow the military

regime — including violence," he said.

The Alliance includes several armed insurgent groups fighting the military, but they have lost ground in the past year to tough government offensives.

The military took over direct power from a military-backed one-party government in 1988. It stepped in to crush nationwide pro-democracy demonstrations, killing hundreds of people, but then held the elections which gave a massive mandate to the NLD, the boldest of the opposition parties.

The military has promised to hand over power to the NLD-dominated Parliament, but Khin Nyunt said the military would insist on "advising" the

elected legislators on the constitution they must draft before any political change can take place.

Khin Nyunt also indicated the constitution would have to be approved by other political parties and then ratified by the people in a national referendum.

Diplomats in Rangoon have said the military simply appears to be trying to hold onto power as long as possible.

The military has dominated Burma since a 1962 coup d'etat overthrew the elected government and began years of one-party socialist rule that have turned one of Southeast Asia's richest countries into one of the least developed nations in the world.

NATION, July 15, 1990

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PRISAIBA-29

Burma troops urged to mutiny

A THAI-based Burmese democracy movement has called on Rangoon soldiers to mutiny if the ruling military junta orders troops to attack civilians on Martyrs' Day on Thursday.

"In the event of an order to perpetrate violence against the civil populace, the CRDB (Committee for Restoration of Democracy in Burma) calls upon soldiers subordinate to these orders, be they officers or otherwise, to immediately disarm and place in custody, out of harm's way, any officer advocating violence," the group said in a statement received by AFP yesterday.

Thousands of people are expected to march through the Burmese capital on Thursday, which is also the anniversary of the death of Burma's independence hero, Gen Aung San, who was assassinated 43 years ago.

Aung San's daughter, Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD) which won a landslide victory in the May general elections, has been held under

house arrest since July 20 last year despite international appeals for her release.

The military junta has yet to transfer power following the elections.

The CRDB statement said. "In the event of civil unrest or a general strike brought about by the junta's refusal to transfer power, CRDB calls upon the Burma Army to refrain from obeying any junta-orchestrated directives which would result in violence against the people."

The CRDB also called on officers and men of the armed forces to immediately swear allegiance to the elected national assembly and to release all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, NLD chairman Tin Oo, and Burma's former prime minister U Nu.

U Soe Nyunt, a member of the commemorative committee, said in Rangoon on Friday that both the public and the various political parties would be allowed to pay their respects to the martyrs without restrictions.

But Maj-Gen Khin Nyunt, chief of the Burmese military intelligence and first secretary of the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), warned that action would be taken against mass demonstrations aimed at creating disturbances in the country.

The CRDB also warned the soldiers that any undue delay in showing their support for the newly elected national assembly would be taken into account when power was finally transferred.

"We still seek every means to restore the right of political expression to all citizens of Burma. We firmly believe that all democratic people retain the inherent obligation to eject by revolution a tyrannical ruler," the statement said.

"The Committee for Restoration of Democracy in Burma hopes the Burmese people will be spared the travails of bloody revolution," it said.

BANGKOK POST July 16, 1990

Dissidents ask Rangoon troops to disobey orders

Agence France-Presse

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Suu Kyi: calls for release

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PR/SA/BA-30

PR/SA/BA-31

PK/SA/BA-32

4 THE HINDUSTAN TIMES, NEW DELHI, TUESDAY JULY 31, 1990

Gujral concern at Burma situation

HT Correspondent

NEW DELHI, July 30

Foreign Minister I. K. Gujral today shared, with members of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee the Government's assessment that international community was increasingly coming to the conclusion that there was no intention on the part of the military rulers of Burma (Myanmar) to devolve — or even share power with the National League for Democracy (NLD) which swept the polls in May end.

The Committee attached to the Ex-

ternal Affairs Ministry in a resolution extended its firm support to the people of Burma in their struggle for democracy and freedom — and urged the military authorities to release NLD leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other leaders of the democratic movement and hand over power peacefully to the elected representatives of the people without further delay.

Congratulating the people of Burma for their courage and reaffirmation of faith in democracy, the Consultative Committee felicitated Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on the massive mandate received by her National League for Democracy.

The Committee expressed deep concern at the continued detention of the leaders of the movement for democracy and the delay by the military authorities in handing over power to the elected representatives of the people of Burma.

The Parliamentary Consultative Committee urged the Government to raise this issue, of the military rulers not handing over the reins of power to the elected representatives of the people, in the United Nations and other international forum at the earliest.

PK/SA/BA-33

Govt urged to raise Burma issue in UN

The Times of India New Delhi, July 30. The parliamentary consultative committee attached to the external affairs ministry today urged the government to raise the issue of the military and other international forum, the issue of delay on the part of the military regime of Myanmar (Burma) in handing over power to the elected representatives of the people.

It also condemned the continued incarceration of Ms Aung San Suu Kyi and other leaders of the democratic movement and called for their immediate release.

In a resolution adopted at its meeting, the committee congratulated the people of Myanmar on the reaffirmation of their faith in democracy and felicitated Ms Suu Kyi on the massive mandate received by her National League for Democracy.

THE TIMES OF INDIA, NEW DELHI, TUESDAY, JULY 31, 1990

PRISA/BK-34

NLD sets date for parliament meeting

Agence France-Presse

Rangoon

BURMA's main opposition party ended a two-day congress here yesterday by calling for the convening of parliament in September and talks to begin with the ruling military junta.

The congress of the National League for Democracy (NLD), which swept May 27 general elections, also called for the speedy release of its leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been held under house arrest for just over a year.

In a statement released after the congress, the NLD said differences between it and the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc) could be settled amicably. The Slorc, which was formed

following a September 1988 military power grab that put a bloody end to nationwide pro-democracy protests, has yet to hand over power following the elections.

"The Gandhi Declaration," as the statement has been dubbed following the NLD's decision to hold its congress in Gandhi Hall, said talks with the Slorc should be held freely and openly with mutual respect and carried out in a spirit of national reconciliation.

As the over 500 members left the hall, NLD spokesman U Kyi Maung stressed that his party was not trying to force a confrontation with the Slorc. "This is not a contest of wills, neither is it a contest of wits. We are trying to find a medium which would benefit us

all," said U Kyi Maung.

The conference ended without incident, with a huge crowd of supporters, estimated by observers to be at least 5,000 strong, earlier allowed to approach the hall which was heavily guarded by troops and riot police.

A five-block area had been cordoned off and barred to traffic.

During the day the crowd sat on the pavement around the hall under the hot sun to listen to the resolutions broadcast on loudspeakers.

Loud cheers and hand-clapping accompanied each announcement, increasing in volume when the petition demanding the release of Aung San Suu Kyi was read out.

The NLD also called for the release of their 63-year-old chairman Tin Oo, who is serving three years hard labour for sedition, and other political prisoners as well as appealing for the return of democratic rights and the removal of restrictions hindering freedom.

Earlier the conference rejected suggestions that the recently elected parliament, in which the NLD holds a massive majority, was a constituent assembly.

"Without the powers conferred to the parliament, no constitution can be drafted which could have any legitimacy," the statement said.

The Slorc said on Friday that it would not hand over power to a government formed under a temporary constitution.

NLD rejects 'shameful' Burmese army demands

Reuter

Nakon, July 31, 90

Rangoon

THE opposition challenged Burma's hardline army rulers yesterday, rejecting military plans for a protracted transfer of power and calling on the army to convene a new parliament to speed formation of a civilian government.

The National League for Democracy issued a toughly worded statement calling for a rapid handover of power and attacking the military's delay as "shameful".

The unexpected move was the first sign of open confrontation with the army since the opposition was denied the spoils of its election victory two months ago, diplomats said.

"It is against political nature that the League, which has overwhelmingly won enough seats in the parliament to form a government, has been prohibited from minimum democratic rights," the statement said.

"It is shameful in the eyes of the people and of the international community."

The statement, titled the "Gandhi Declaration" after the hall in which it was drawn up on Sunday, was given to

reporters at a news conference at the party's headquarters yesterday.

It was the first organized news conference since League leaders Aung San Suu Kyi and Tin Oo were detained more than a year ago.

The League won 80 per cent of the 485 seats contested in the May 27 elections. However, all its subsequent calls for talks with the ruling military council have been ignored.

It rejected army demands last Friday that the assembly draw up a constitution along guidelines set down by an appointed convention.

The ruling military council would submit the constitution to a plebiscite and approve it before allowing a parliament to meet, an army spokesman said.

"The National League for Democracy cannot accept the army declaration and we absolutely disagree with it," League central executive committee member Chan Aye told the news conference.

The League, which has faced growing pressure from within to convert its election victory into power, had drawn up its own constitution that it would pass at the proposed assembly, acting chairman Kyi Maung said.

"The multi-party democracy general

election was held to convene a parliament not a constituent assembly. Therefore the League, which has attained the people's mandate, has drawn up a temporary constitution for convening a parliament," he said.

Winning League candidates agreed on the declaration at their first full meeting since the May 27 poll. Some 10,000 people gathered outside the hall, ignoring a big military presence and cheering as loudspeakers broadcast results of the two-day talks.

The League demanded the release of all political prisoners, including its secretary Aung San Suu Kyi and chairman Tin Oo.

The demands were the first signs the opposition would no longer accept the military's delaying tactics.

"Both the opposition and the government are now on a course that can only lead to confrontation," said a diplomat in Rangoon.

The official *Working Peoples Daily* yesterday denied the army was delaying a transfer of power.

"The simple fact is that if the [army council] had wished to hang onto power it could very well have done so. And may we add, with very little difficulty," the paper said.

Japan attacked over aid to Rangoon

The Nation

NATION, July 31, 90

AN overseas Burmese political action group yesterday condemned the Japanese government's resumption of assistance to the military government in Rangoon with an advance grant of \$22 million.

The US-based Committee for Restoration of Democracy in Burma (CRDB) said in a statement issued yesterday that the aid was tantamount to an endorsement by Japan of Burma's rulers.

"With this money safely in the bank, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc)'s Goebbelsque spokesman Kyaw Sann was

emboldened on Friday to announce the invention of more roadblocks to prevent the transfer of power because Slorc is now officially backed by Tokyo," the group's general secretary, Ye Kyaw Thu, said in the statement.

The group, which represents pro-democracy Burmese expatriates throughout the world, said the Japanese government's decision to resume aid to Rangoon ran counter to its May 29 policy guideline that Japan would not resume assistance to Burma until Slorc:

- released Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners,

- accomplished a transfer of power to civilian rule.

"Aid resumption under current conditions constitutes egregious breach of faith, and should, by any normal diplomatic standard, be interpreted as an endorsement by Japan of the policies of Slorc," the general secretary said.

He said the Japanese aid would be used to finance Japanese projects in Burma and purchase of equipment from Japanese private companies.

Ye Kyaw Thu said his group believed part of the aid money would be siphoned off by the military junta to "offset the cost of the bullets which keep the Burmese people under the gun."

PR/SA/BA-37

The Nation: Sep 17, 1990

A4 | Local & Regional news

NLD accepts govt proposal

Associated Press

Rangoon

BURMA'S main pro-democracy party has agreed to a proposal by the ruling military that a national constitution be drafted before the transfer of power to a democratically-elected government occurs, party sources said yesterday.

The National League of Democracy won a massive victory in general elections last May 27 but to date the generals who run the country have refused to relinquish power.

In a speech last week, Maj Gen Khin Nyunt said it was necessary for political parties to cooperate in drafting a constitution. He also suggested a national convention be convened to lay down guidelines for writing the document.

The National League earlier had called for a temporary constitution that would allow a transfer of power to be followed by a national convention that would draft a permanent document.

The sources said the NLD last week sent a letter to the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council agreeing to Khin Nyunt's plan.

The NLD won 392 of the 485 contested parliamentary seats, while the conservative, pro-military party was routed in the May polls.

Earlier this month the military

arrested the remaining top leaders of the NLD, including its acting chief Kyi Maung. The two main leaders of the party, Aung San Suu Kyi and Tin Oo, were placed under house arrest in July 1989, and Tin Oo was later jailed.

Millions of Burmese rose up against military rule in 1988 but the pro-democracy movement was brutally crushed in September of that year. However, renewed anti-government unrest has increased in recent months.

■ A soldier has been seriously injured by a group of Buddhist monks in the northern Burmese city of Mandalay four days before the second anniversary of Burma's military coup, *Agence France-Presse* quoted Radio Rangoon as saying on Saturday.

The official radio said in a report monitored in Bangkok that the injured army private was among four off-duty soldiers who were pelted with stones and beaten with sticks by a group of monks as they rode past a monastery, it said.

Three of the soldiers escaped, the radio said, adding that local people "begged the monks to stop beating the soldier and save his life."

The radio reported another incident of monks pelting security troops with stones on Friday in the northern city.

To: George Pittaway
c/o J. Cohen
(407) 479 1888

PR/SA/BA-38

FR: J.W. Pittaway

Jim thinks you should contact Col H about govt!
Thought you might want to see this - earliest.
Dad

Washington Post - OpEd
Tue Oct 4, 1990 A21

Thant Myint-U

Burma's Fight For Freedom

Nowhere else in the world is the human rights situation as bad as in Burma. Nowhere else have people fought so hard for their freedom and yet still suffer under the threat of terror and repression. And nowhere else will the rest of the world care less, unless it becomes too late.

On the same day that President Bush delivered his address to Congress on the new international order, a crowd of Burmese students demonstrated in Mandalay for democracy and human rights. Eleven people were killed. Hundreds have been arrested in the past two weeks alone, including the leadership of the National League for Democracy, the country's largest political party. More demonstrations are expected these next few weeks, and every day Burma moves closer and closer to civil war.

The unrest began two years ago when millions of people marched in Rangoon, Mandalay and other Burmese cities demanding an end to the 26-year military dictatorship of Gen. Ne Win, which has impoverished what was once the richest nation in Southeast Asia. Gen. Ne Win responded by gunning down as many as 10,000 unarmed civilians, many secondary school students as young as 12 or 13.

Since the crackdown in September 1988, tens of thousands of people have been arrested, executed or have disappeared. Military tribunals have replaced civil courts, gatherings of more than four people are forbidden, and schools and universities have remained closed. Young men live in constant fear of being taken away for porter service in the remote

And yet the people of Burma carry on in their fight for democracy and believe that the world—especially the United States—is on their side. Last May, the military, thinking that it had jailed and intimidated enough opposition activists, held "free and fair elections." The military lost, winning only 10 of 492 seats. Since May, the military has moved step by step to invalidate those elections, and the resulting anger has brought Burma back to the point of another violent explosion.

Though Burma's government has followed an isolationist foreign policy, Burma is not isolated, and the international community and the United Nations can do a lot to prevent further bloodshed. First, multinational companies, including many American companies, can stop funding the regime through their investments in the military's projects. Many of these foreign companies are engaged in timber and mineral extraction, and the resulting environmental damage (Burma could lose all its rain forests in five years) threatens the whole region.

Second, the United States can take a harder line on the military's suspected involvement in the heroin trade, involvement which may be providing Gen. Ne Win with much-needed cash. Certainly the United States should end all talk of resuming anti-narcotics assistance to the military regime, as suggested by the DEA and others in Washington.

Third, the United Nations as a whole can speak out on human rights, end bilateral and multilateral assistance and perhaps move toward comprehensive sanctions. The military has shown time and again how sensitive it is to foreign criticism, and pulling away outside support for the regime could make all the difference in ensuring peaceful democratic change.

In early August, China began providing Burma with more than \$1 billion worth of arms. Burma is fighting ethnic insurgencies that have already spilled into Thailand and India. A bloody and sustained confrontation between the military and the people could eventually have serious international repercussions. Better to act before the situation reaches crisis proportions. The United States and the rest of the world can do more to help.

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Since the crackdown in September 1988, tens of thousands of people have been arrested, executed or have disappeared. Military tribunals have replaced civil courts, gatherings of more than four people are forbidden, and schools and universities have remained closed. Young men live in constant fear of being taken away for porter service in the remote jungles, where they are used as human minesweepers and made to carry army supplies until they die. Torture is both severe and widespread, and imprisoned students are subject to beatings and electric shocks and kept in solitary confinement.

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The writer, grandson of U Thant, is secretary of the Burma Fund and a senior fellow at the International Center for Development Policy.

10/28/90

Burmese Monks' Movement Crushed

Army Raids Politically Active Monasteries

By William Branigin
Washington Post Foreign Service

MANDALAY, Myanmar—With a massive show of force and a series of raids on politically active monasteries here, Myanmar's military junta appears to have crushed, at least for now, a budding opposition movement by the country's Buddhist monks.

Angered by a boycott in which monks in this central Burmese city refused to minister to soldiers, the military has raided more than a dozen monasteries since Monday and seized a variety of prohibited items ranging from political tracts to slingshots. Authorities of Myanmar, formerly Burma, have not publicized any arrests, but political sources said at least 40 monks have been detained and that others are in hiding.

Today this former Burmese capital has the look of an occupied city. But instead of foreign invaders, like the British who captured Mandalay in 1885, today's occupiers are members of Myanmar's own Tatmadaw, as the army is called. Helmeted troops armed with automatic weapons and grenade launchers patrol neighborhoods on foot and in trucks, man barbed-wire roadblocks on downtown streets and guard key intersections and installations.

As the 11 p.m. curfew approached one night this week, soldiers cradling German-designed G-3 assault rifles set out in single file through a residential neighborhood like a combat patrol through enemy territory.

Even before the raids, troops had taken over several Buddhist pagodas in the southwestern part of the city near the more activist monasteries, turning the shrines into garrisons and staging areas. Residents said some had been brought in from areas where the Burmese army is fighting ethnic insurgencies.

On the day the raids started, half a dozen troop trucks were parked in the interior courtyard of a military-held pagoda listed in guidebooks as a tourist attraction, and a room featuring a showcase of bronze Buddha statues had been turned into a command post.

Barefoot officers, observing a rule against footwear in such holy places, sat on the floor tapping out reports on a typewriter and shuf-

fling through sheaves of papers, while others worked a telephone and radios. "We've been having some problems with the monks, but it's calm now," said a captain. "The monks are getting too much involved in politics."

The latest trouble here began Aug. 8, on the second anniversary of a 1988 military massacre in the capital, Yangon, in which soldiers killed at least 1,000 unarmed demonstrators protesting the imposition of martial law. About 300 monks and students who marched to mark the occasion were met by troops who tried to arrest a student leader and eventually opened fire on the demonstrators, killing two monks and two students, opposition activists said. The government denies that there were any deaths.

In late August, more than 3,000 monks from at least three Buddhist dissident organizations began refusing to accept alms from soldiers or officiate at ceremonies for them. The boycott was joined by many of the estimated 70,000 monks in Mandalay, considered Myanmar's religious capital, and this month began spreading to other cities including Yangon.

Apparently alarmed by the boycott's effect on military morale in a country where more than 80 percent of the population adheres to a devout brand of Buddhism, the junta last week banned the three monastic sects and ordered the monks to end the boycott. At the same time, the military stepped up efforts to appease senior Buddhist abbots by staging televised appearances in which the generals knelt before them, as is traditional for the faithful here.

However, critics said the efforts may have backfired somewhat when the generals also were filmed giving the abbots such nontraditional offerings as color television sets and bottles of imported soft drinks.

The junta, known as the State Law and Order Restoration Council and headed by Gen. Saw Maung, sent troops into Mandalay's sprawling Phayagyi monastery as a first step, raiding 133 monastic buildings within the huge compound Monday. According to government radio, the troops seized two mimeograph machines, stamps, ink pads, staplers



BY BRAD WYE—THE WASHINGTON POST

and various "illegal" publications, flags and other political paraphernalia, including badges of the opposition National League for Democracy. Despite the league's overwhelming victory in a national election in May, the ruling council so far has refused to transfer power to it or allow the convening of a new parliament.

In an apparent effort to discredit the monks, official media have also reported the seizure at raided monasteries of jewelry, stacks of money, drugs, playing cards, wigs and civilian clothing, including women's brassieres. Photos have been published of seized weapons such as slingshots and homemade darts.

At least two teaching monasteries in Yangon also have been raided in recent days, residents said. Coinciding with the raids, security forces have closed a number of National League for Democracy offices in Yangon and other cities and detained several party leaders.

Faced with the strong-arm tactics, dozens of high-ranking monks from Yangon and the Mandalay area have publicly withdrawn support for the boycott. Dissidents and foreign diplomats say there appears to be little chance that the monkhood, a potentially powerful organization, can pick up the pieces of the political opposition and lead a new upheaval against the restoration council, which has ruled since September 1988.

However, resentment of the military rule remains intense. "We need foreign countries to help us. That's the only way," said a high-ranking 69-year-old abbot.

PR/SA/BA



Monks set out to beg for alms in the city of Mandalay, where many monasteries were invaded by soldiers this month. BY WILLIAM BRANIGIN—THE WASHINGTON POST

Myanmar Cracks Down on Dissent

Many Burmese Lose Hope for Peaceful Transition to Democracy

By William Branigin
Washington Post Foreign Service

YANGON, Myanmar—This country's ruling military junta, apparently determined to hold onto power, is pressing a broad crackdown against dissidents that has effectively nullified the opposition's landslide victory in elections last May, according to Burmese and foreign political analysts here.

Hopes in Myanmar, formerly Burma, that the government might allow an orderly transition from authoritarian rule to democracy have given way to pessimism and despair as prospects for peaceful change have dimmed. Government opponents convey an air of resignation, coupled with fear that they are at the mercy of the ruling junta.

"Now, after five months of hoping that the elections meant something, people are beginning to realize that it was all a big charade," said a resident of the capital, Yangon, formerly Rangoon, who asked for anonymity.

"We are helpless without arms," lamented an elderly Buddhist abbot in a monastery near the central city of Mandalay. Echoing his frustration, a Burmese office worker in the capital said: "We're just like slaves right now. People just hate this government."

In its latest crackdown, the military last week

raided Buddhist monasteries in Mandalay to force an end to a boycott in which monks refused to minister to soldiers. Troops also stormed a number of offices of the opposition National League for Democracy, closing some and seizing the contents of others, sources said.

The league's headquarters near the Shwedagon Pagoda here has been effectively shut down and its front gate padlocked after security forces raided it during curfew hours last week and hauled away documents and equipment.

At the same time, at least a dozen leaders of the party were arrested, including four members of its executive committee. Since July 1989, all but four of the original 15 members of the league's executive committee have been jailed or placed under house arrest. Dozens of other prominent party members have been detained on various charges, Burmese sources report, including some winning candidates in the May elections.

Today this former British colony seems a drab and fearful place, dominated by a junta that appears bent on stamping out even token opposition and whose foreign policy is based essentially on isolationism and xenophobia. In many respects it is a country forgotten by time. Although limited eco-

See MYANMAR, A36, Col. 4



BY WILLIAM BRANIGAN—THE WASHINGTON POST

Monks set out to beg for alms in the city of Mandalay, where many monasteries were invaded by soldiers this month.

Myanmar Presses New Crackdown

MYANMAR, From A29

economic reforms have allowed slight modernizations in recent years, buses whose design predates World War II still wheeze down the streets, and weeds and shrubs grow out of crevices in the capital's decaying British colonial buildings.

The most ambitious construction project currently underway here is an elaborate pagoda commissioned by longtime strongman Ne Win in what critics see as a bid to salvage his legacy. It is being built with private "donations" that Burmese sources say are being squeezed from a recalcitrant public.

Another monument, in effect, to the ruling order is a high brick wall erected around the Defense Ministry compound inside a chain-link fence after crowds nearly stormed the place in 1988. Gun ports have been built into the wall every few yards so soldiers can fire toward the street.

Helmeted troops in battle gear are a common sight on downtown streets, even though there is no sign here of armed resistance to military rule. Army trucks can often be seen parked at curbside, guarded front and rear by soldiers armed with automatic weapons as comrades carry out various operations in the vicinity. Women in sarongs and men wearing traditional skirts called *longyi* pass by silently. No one dares to ask what is going on.

The junta, which calls itself the State Law and Order Restoration Council, has ruled here since seizing power in September 1988 in a crackdown on democracy demonstrators that left at least 1,000 people dead.

Led by hard-line Gen. Saw Maung, the council consists of followers of Gen. Ne Win, who took power in a 1962 coup and resigned in July 1988 after leading the country into economic chaos and international isolation. Ne Win, 79, has been a virtual recluse since his resignation, but is still consulted by the council on important matters, political analysts say.

Since the government party's crushing defeat in May elections for a new People's Assembly, the junta has been stalling on a previous commitment to transfer power to the National League for Democracy, which won 81 percent of the seats.

The junta now appears to be laying the groundwork to disqualify a number of elected league officials by various means, including the application of strict campaign financing rules that were spelled out only after the election, political sources

sign pledges to accept a junta decree issued July 27 that essentially declares the newly elected body to be a constituent assembly, rather than the parliament that voters thought they were electing.

Subsequent statements by the martial-law regime have stipulated a protracted process for drafting a new constitution in accordance with guidelines to be established by a future "national convention" named by the junta.

The drafting, by the People's Assembly, would be overseen by the ruling council and, once an acceptable constitution emerged, new elections for a parliament would be held. Only then would the junta transfer power to a civilian government. The junta has let it be known unofficially that it envisages the process taking from two to six years, political analysts said.

"The winds of change are blowing everywhere but in Burma," a senior Western diplomat said. "It is absolutely certain that [the junta] will never, ever allow the [league] to take over. There will be no free elections anymore in Burma."

Such pessimism contrasts sharply with the euphoria that infected the league after it steamrolled a field of 93 parties in the May 27 elections, emerging with 392 of the assembly's 485 seats.

The government's National Unity Party, formerly called the Burma Socialist Program Party, won only 10 seats in the first multi-party elections in the country in 30 years. The party, founded by Ne Win in 1962, had been the nation's only legal political party until 1988.

In July 1989, the junta placed the league's charismatic leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, 45, under house arrest and jailed the party's 63-year-old chairman, Tin Oo, who has since been sentenced summarily by a military court to three years at hard labor for creating "public disturbances."

Last month, the league's acting chairman, Kyi Maung, a 72-year-old retired colonel, was arrested for passing on to foreign embassies an allegedly secret document sent to him by the junta's secret police chief, Maj. Gen. Khin Nyunt. Currently in charge of the league is Aung Shwe, a retired brigadier general. Through an intermediary, he declined to meet a reporter last week on grounds that it was not safe to do so.

In its latest statement, dated Oct. 9, the league said it would form a "parliamentary committee" to work for the convening of the People's Assembly and repeated earlier calls for negotiations with the junta. Burmese students and activist monks criticized this approach as too timid but seem unable at present themselves to generate a sustained challenge to the junta.

Given the military's reputation, its presence in force in Mandalay and Yangon frightens many residents. "I am very afraid," one young Burmese said in halting English as he glanced nervously at hundreds of troops in battle gear deploying at dawn Oct. 21 in neighborhoods around Mandalay's monasteries. Asked if he was afraid of the army, he answered, "Afraid and hate."

Contributing to the atmosphere is the Orwellian quality of many of the junta's actions and pronouncements. Large red billboards around Mandalay and Yangon proclaim slogans in Burmese and English such as "Crush All Destructive Elements" and "Observance of Discipline Leads to Safety." One, across the street from the U.S. Embassy, reads "Down With Minions of Colonialism."

In an account of raids against six Mandalay monasteries Oct. 24, the official radio said the monks in charge "were full of smiles, happily permitting the searches because they were encouraged by the efforts being made through the use of power to purify the religion."

Ex-Head of Vatican Bank Retires

Reuter

VATICAN CITY, Oct. 30—American-born Archbishop Paul Marcinkus, the controversial former head of the Vatican Bank, retired today from papal service.

A Vatican statement said Pope John Paul II had accepted Marcinkus's request to retire as governor of Vatican City, the job he kept when he stepped down as head of

nances became associated with bankers Michele Sindona and Roberto Calvi. Both were convicted of fraud and died under mysterious circumstances.

Marcinkus said he and the Vatican Bank had no responsibility for the 1982 crash of Calvi's Banco Ambrosiano. Magistrates accused the bank of responsibility for \$1.3 billion in bad Ambrosiano debts.

Marcinkus 68 said he would re-

U.S. Debates Resuming Anti-Drug Aid to Myanmar

MYANMAR, From A17

assert that authorities in Yunnan Province, which borders Myanmar, have turned a blind eye to it on the understanding that the drugs would not be sold in China.

According to knowledgeable sources, some officials of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) favor resuming the Burmese aid program as the best way to fight the growing heroin trade and gather information about traffickers. However, the State Department has raised objections on human rights grounds, and the General Accounting Office has criticized the aid program as ineffective anyway.

"The DEA wants to unlink human rights and narcotics," said one informed source. "The DEA wants to stop the heroin trade and [feels that] to do that, you have to deal with the Burmese army. And the State Department says that's like dealing with Hitler."

A dispute also has arisen over the volume of opium production in Myanmar, with the CIA estimating it at 2,600 tons last year and the DEA putting the figure closer to 1,600 tons, sources said. But even the lower figure represents a record crop—more than a six-fold increase over the 260 tons produced in Myanmar in 1976.

According to a report last year by

the General Accounting Office, the Burmese government has used U.S. anti-narcotics aid ineffectively and refused to allow adequate U.S. monitoring of the program. In Myanmar, "corruption facilitates illicit trafficking and makes effective action against narcotics difficult to sustain," the report said. It alluded to "narcotics-related corruption among government and military officials," but provided no details.

In a September 1989 U.S. congressional hearing, Sen. Daniel P. Moynihan (D-N.Y.) likened the Myanmar of reclusive strongman Ne Win to Panama under its former military ruler, Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega. "Ne Win is nothing more than an Asian Noriega," Moynihan testified. "His army has for years protected the operations of Khun Sa, the notorious opium warlord of the Golden Triangle. Burmese army defectors tell of officers moving heroin down [Myanmar's] roads and diverting U.S.-provided helicopters for counterinsurgency campaigns."

Under the anti-narcotics program, the United States has supplied Myanmar with 28 helicopters, six transport planes and five Thrush aerial spray aircraft, the GAO noted. Informed sources in Yangon, formerly Rangoon, say there have been "credible" reports that the military has used the helicopters in counterinsurgency operations against rebels

of the Karen ethnic minority, who have been fighting the Burmese central government since 1948 but have not been linked with drug trafficking.

During the 1980s, the Burmese Communist Party—the largest insurgent organization, with an estimated 10,000 to 15,000 guerrillas—succeeded in taking over a major part of the lucrative opium trade to compensate for dwindling support from China. But the party virtually disintegrated in April 1989 following a mutiny by members of the Wa hill tribe who made up the bulk of the guerrilla force.

Using Lo Hsing-han as an intermediary, top military officials promptly forged friendly relations with leaders of the Wa, who continue to engage in drug trafficking, informed sources said. Lo Hsing-han, who began his trafficking career as a progovernment militia commander, was publicly identified by a U.S. official in 1972 as Southeast Asia's "opium king." He was jailed on rebellion charges in Myanmar from 1973 to 1980, but has since reemerged as a major drug kingpin, according to anti-narcotics sources in the region.

Capitalizing on Lo Hsing-han's introductions, the army since early this year has been using the Wa to fight the ethnic Shan rebels of opium warlord Khun Sa, a former ally of the Burmese military who was seen as having grown too powerful. He was indicted last year in New York on heroin-trafficking charges, but remains at large in the Golden Triangle. Moynihan has publicly described the junta's new alliance with the Wa as merely a "change in business partners."

Still at
TREMENDOUS
SAVINGS

DREAMING OF BEING ORGANIZED?

air and the crunch of urban life. Besides pristine
the peacefulness of urban life. Besides pristine



Buddhist monks, boycotting the military, beg for food near the site of the August riot in Mandalay

BURMA

A People Under Siege

The generals crack down, but neither opponents at home nor critics abroad seem able to do anything about it

By SANDRA BURTON RANGOON

Just beyond the gaze of the golden Buddha in the Eindawya pagoda in Mandalay, the spiritual heart of Burma, dozens of soldiers slouched around the courtyard, propping their rifles against the stone balustrades. Outside the temple gates, more troops manned barbed-wire barricades. "Please leave," an army captain shouted last week to a group of tourists trying to photograph the Buddha. "You may come back when our security situation is right."

Burma's brief experiment with multi-party politics is over, and the country is reverting to the xenophobia and isolation of its past. In a nationwide crackdown on its opposition, the military junta led by Senior General Saw Maung has arrested at least 40 officials of the National League for Democracy, including 16 members of parliament, and some 200 rebel monks, many of them activists of the Young Monks Association. Hundreds more monks have slipped out of their monasteries and returned to their homes in the countryside. Six months after the League won a surprise electoral victory, the army has effectively canceled the results at gunpoint.

As the glimmer of democracy is snuffed out, tentative moves toward a more open economy that Burma began in 1989 are likely to go with it. Sometimes called the world's richest basket case because of its wealth of

such natural resources as teak and minerals, Burma needs foreign aid and investment to modernize. In the wake of the elections last May, international lending agencies were lining up to welcome Burma, and foreign businessmen were studying the country's new, liberal economic policies, but many investors are pulling back. "No one will lend money to Burma until it sorts out its political situation," says a visiting World Bank official.

Just as the crackdown was reaching its peak last week, Amnesty International made public another indictment of the army's brutal rule. In a 72-page special report, the London-based human-rights organization accused Burma's junta of "silencing the democratic movement" with systematic terror and torture.

To dramatize their plight, four Burmese hijacked a Thai Airways jetliner on Saturday and demanded the release of imprisoned dissidents. After diverting the Bangkok-to-Rangoon flight to Calcutta, the hijackers said they wanted to make the world "hear our pleas for justice and human rights." They surrendered peaceably to Indian authorities.

Silencing democracy describes Burma's standard operating procedure since

which was to govern until elections.

To worldwide amazement, the May 1990 elections in Burma, renamed Myanmar last year, were generally free and fair. The League, under the leadership of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of Burma's national hero, won a huge majority in parliament. The military showed its true colors by keeping her under house arrest and calling for a convention to draw up a new constitution, a process that could take years.

The inevitable clash occurred Aug. 8, the second anniversary of the 1988 massacre. Students and monks demonstrated in Mandalay. When riot police leveled their rifles at rock throwers, a monk tried to intercede. He was hit by a bullet, and 14 other protesters were injured, though the army denies that anyone was killed.

In protest, activist monks declared a boycott against military men and their families, refusing to accept the alms from them that earn the donor merit in a future life, or to participate in weddings and funerals. The boycott stirred anxiety among the troops. "Most of the young soldiers come from villages where monks are held

in high respect," says Omar Farouk, a Burmese Muslim living in Bangkok.

The high command retaliated by ringing rebellious monasteries with troops and buzzing them with helicopters. This led to a very Burmese conflict: a slingshot war. Monks pelted the army patrols with stones fired from slingshots. The soldiers asked for permission to shoot back, but their commander refused, ordering them to re-



Junta leader Senior General Saw Maung

DOMINIC FAULDER—BUREAU BANGKOK

MIDDLE EAST

Where Hatred Begets Hatred

Even in death, Meir Kahane makes Israel an angrier place

Meir Kahane never expected to die peacefully. "People are frightened by my message because they know in their hearts that it is true," he once said. "They can stop me, but they cannot change the truth."

The Brooklyn-born rabbi spent his life preaching a doctrine of intolerance, racial hatred and violent confrontation. Last week he became a victim of Jewish-Arab animosity himself when he was gunned down by an assassin in a New York City hotel. Charged with Kahane's murder was El Sayid Nosir, an Egyptian-born New York City maintenance worker who became a

conscious and injuring three others. Two policemen were also hurt, and 13 Jewish ers were arrested.

Kahane might have enjoyed the spotlight. He had managed to alienate even line Zionists with his abrasive tactics calls for the mass expulsion of Arabs Israel and the occupied territories. B message of hate and brutally simple tions appealed to a small and dedi constituency. Founder of the New J based Jewish Defense League, Ka moved to Israel in 1971, where he at the ultra-right Kach movement and elected to the Knesset in 1984. Four

turn fire only with slingshots of their own. Meanwhile, Saw Maung was preparing his counterattack. After a pious prayer to the Buddha, he outlawed then abolished some Buddhist sects. Saw Maung then sent his troops into Mandalay's monasteries "to clean out unlawful organizations."

"The political movement that began in 1988 is effectively over now," says an Asian diplomat. Says a Western official: "One by one they have knocked off the challenges to the regime, from the League to the monks." The consensus in Rangoon is that the junta can survive any sanctions its Western critics may impose for as long as the military leaders are determined to do so.

When Japanese professor Sadako Ogata arrived in Burma last week as a special envoy of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Saw Maung expressed his contempt for the very notion. "I will not give the kind of rights demanded by the Voice of America," he said in a speech. "I will not give the students the right to stage demonstrations. I won't let the people emulate the incidents in Eastern Europe."

Until he does so, he can expect little or no help for his free-falling economy, with an inflation rate of more than 75%, a gaping balance of payments deficit and a budget that devotes 40% of its resources to the military. The cutoff of U.S. aid after the 1988 riots has had no discernible effect, leading some American policymakers to ponder whether to try some limited involvement with the Burmese government once again. Burton Levin, the former U.S. ambassador to Burma, says no. "To think you can sit down and talk to these people would be to ignore the history of the last 28 years," he says. "If these people remain in power, there will be no change."

Many Burmese who hate the regime also lament their inability to change it. "We are rubbish," says a student in Mandalay. "Our tradition and our religion prevent us from getting things done," says a Rangoon intellectual. The pacific teachings of Theravada Buddhism do not, for example, allow self-immolation of the sort practiced by protesting Vietnamese monks in the 1960s.

Unable to remake their nation or count on rescue from abroad, large numbers of Burmese seek solace in the ghostly world of nats, the pantheon of spirits whose influence predates Buddhism. Despite the military siege, thousands of pilgrims entered monasteries all over the country last week. They prayed, tucking money into the clothing on figures of the nats. Then they sought out the astrologers who line the covered walkways around the temples. Questioned about Burma's future, one astrologer in Mandalay cast a wary glance over his shoulder to see if anyone might be listening. Then he whispered, "Burma is waiting."



In Jerusalem, his mourners echoed Kahane's call for "Death to the Arabs!"

Brutally simple solutions that appealed to a small and dedicated constituency.

U.S. citizen in 1989. Nosir, who was arrested after he was wounded in a shoot-out with a Postal Service officer, is believed to have acted alone.

The reaction in Israel was swift and violent. Hours after the shooting, two Palestinians were shot dead by a man witnesses identified as a Jewish settler in the West Bank, apparently in revenge. Bracing for further violence, Israel deployed reinforcements to guard roads, intersections and the homes of prominent Palestinian and left-wing Israeli politicians, who also came under Kahane's wrath. Said Miriam Cohen, a Kahane follower from Jerusalem: "The Arabs will pay for this with their lives. I don't care if hundreds die."

At Kahane's funeral two days later, more than 20,000 followers marched through Jerusalem chanting "Death to the Arabs!" As the procession streamed through the city, they searched stores and markets for Arabs, beating one uncon-

later the Israeli Supreme Court barred Kahane from running for re-election on grounds that his movement was "racist."

Some Palestinians reacted with the death of "someone who believed all non-Jews were animals," as a spokesman for the extremist group Islamic put it. But they also feared reprisals from Kahane followers. Faisal Husseini, one of the most prominent Palestinian leaders in Jerusalem, warned that "the Kach porters represent a real danger to the life of every Arab."

If the man is gone, his ideas still are a dangerous appeal, and his death only intensify anger among those who endow him with martyrdom. As the for revenge continue, support for doctrine of hatred and segregation likely to grow among both Israelis and Palestinians.

—By Guy D. S.

Reported by Christine Gorman/New York
Jon D. Hull/Jerusalem

Manerplaw Journal

PRISA/BA-43

In Burmese Jungle, Rebel Fortress Awaits Attack

By STEVEN ERLANGER

Special to The New York Times



Steven Erlanger/The New York Times

Insurgents from the Karen ethnic minority, who are fighting the Burmese military Government, training recently at a camp in Manerplaw, Myanmar, the headquarters of the Democratic Alliance of Burma.



The New York Times

Manerplaw is the headquarters of Burmese insurgent forces.

insurgencies, only about 3,000 remain, relief workers say, the rest defeated by harsh jungle conditions, malaria, lack of food and despair. No more than 1,000 are actually in combat units.

Some 2,000 students are living in the Karen area; nearly 1,000 more are living with the Kachin, with others scattered among other minori-

More adjusted now to the jungle, the student soldiers are "getting better," said Dr. Em Marta, a spokesman for the Karen and the Alliance. General Bo Mya said the students needed more training, experience and arms, "but some have been fighting well alongside our soldiers."

In the Salween Camp of the All Burma Students' Democratic Front, 30 minutes north of here by primitive motorboat, Ko Aung Naing and Ko Myint Oo, both 24 years old and among the camp's leaders, said the students suffered from lack of food, medicine, blankets and mosquito nets. "Now I suffer again from malaria," Mr. Aung Naing said. "Our situation is very difficult."

About 100 students remain at the camp; another 100 are said to be off fighting with the Karen. In two years, Mr. Aung Naing said, 4 students have died fighting while 15 have died from malaria.

There are no weapons in the camp; the Karen provide scarce guns to students only when they fight alongside the Karen. "If there is any attack, we will run away," Mr. Myint Oo said.

The students' leader, Moe Thi Zun, 28, received two journalists with a toothbrush in his pocket and made a show of going over some papers. He fled to the border in April 1989.

common cause with the Karen, Moe Thi Zun said. "We are both oppressed. We share the same fate as a common enemy," the military Government.

The students, however, "are still in the forefront of the national democratic movement," he said. "It means we lead politically and can mobilize both students and the masses inside Burma and along the border."

But Manerplaw is a long way from the Burma plain, and the student too, have become marginalized by the oppressive tactics of the regime. "The most important thing for us to do is to make people take to the streets again," Dr. Marta said. But how?

Frustrated, the Democratic Alliance is discussing the naming of a provisional government, to rival the military one. But the National League for Democracy has not been able to send a representative to the border and it is the League, duly elected now decimated by arrests, that has the best standing to make such a call.

"The N.L.D. has been a bit slow and indecisive, and maybe they underestimated the military enemy," said Tin Maung Win, general secretary of the Democratic Alliance. "We can blame them." Still he implied an

'We Try to Help'

The other groups come to us for aid and assistance," said Gen. Bo Mya, who is also chairman of the Alliance. "We try to help, but we're trying hard up ourselves."

On the Moei River near the border with Thailand, Manerplaw is a well-established community of substantial buildings. Most are wood and thatch, often with stone foundations. They are supplied with electricity by generators. There is a satellite near the Karen guest house, to in touch with the larger world, for those Karen who are Baptist is a bare church, to touch the

students and their leader, Ko Moe Thi Zun, a university physics student in Yangon, the capital, have camp a quarter of a mile away. It is an effort at distance, but the students are fed and protected by the trained by them and fight

side them. At 800 students are now serving in Karen units. But of the 7,000 or more students who fled to the border



Geoffrey Klavertkamp — Asiaweek

Sein Win (c.), with Bo Mya (l.) and Brang Seng, declaring a provisional government: An unprecedented coalition

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

BURMA

PRISA/BA-44

Road to Manerplaw



Manerplaw is virtually impregnable. Home to the guerilla headquarters of Burma's ethnic Karen rebels, the town is hedged to the west by at least 40 kilometres of triple-canopy jungle. To the

east flows the muddy Moei River, which borders Thailand. So when hundreds of Karen soldiers, armed to the teeth with grenades and machine guns, spread out on patrol on Dec. 18, locals knew something was afoot. Some feared that Rangoon's army was planning to bomb the town using newly purchased Chinese F-7 aircraft. Others believed that Rangoon was ready to launch an attack with crack jungle-trained troops. All the rumours came to naught.

Instead, shortly after 9 a.m. in a roughly hewn conference hall, eight National League for Democracy MPs elected in Burma's May 27 polls heard their new "prime minister" proclaim a provisional government. Opposition

leader Sein Win's announcement defied the military-led State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), which has refused to hand over power despite the NLD's landslide election victory. With Sein Win when he declared the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) were Karen Gen. Bo Mya and Kachin chairman Brang Seng. As leaders of the two strongest ethnic groups fighting Rangoon,* the pair brought considerable clout to Sein Win's announcement.

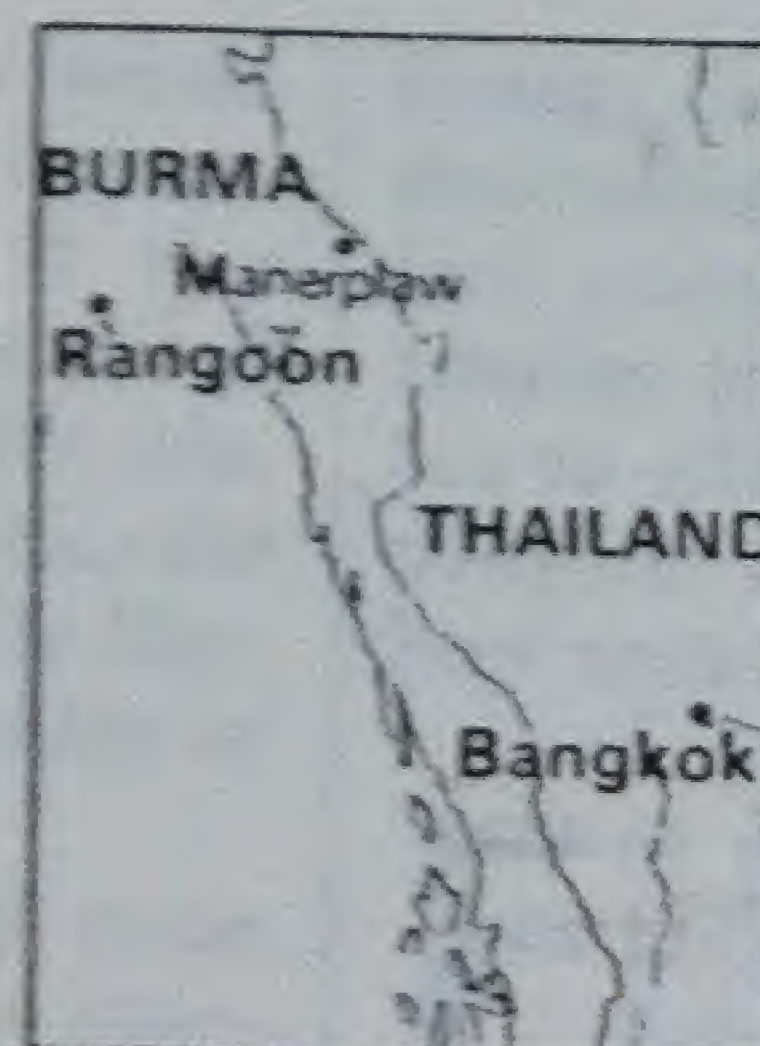
In a speech on the Manerplaw parade ground, Sein Win said the provisional government "is the only option for us because this junta has no will and no way to transfer power to the people. The only option for the representatives elected by

*The Karens and Kachins, along with the Mons, Arakanese and Shans, among others, have been fighting for autonomy since Burma's independence in 1948.

the vast majority of people is to escape into liberated areas and form a government for the people." The aims of his government: to eliminate SLORC; call a national convention with all elected officials and minority group representatives; and establish a democratic government in Burma.

To lure the minorities into the fold, the provisional government agreed to form the Democratic Front of Burma. It embraces Sein Win's cabinet and the Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB), an umbrella group of 21 minority, religious, student and expatriate factions. "The DAB could not be included

in the newly declared government, which was to be made up only of elected officials," says Karen National Union foreign minister Em Marta. A "Supreme Council" of seven Alliance representatives and five League MPs was chosen to decide government policy. Em



Asiaweek Map

ta says Sein Win's cabinet also agreed to share power with the Alliance if the government was ever formally recognised.

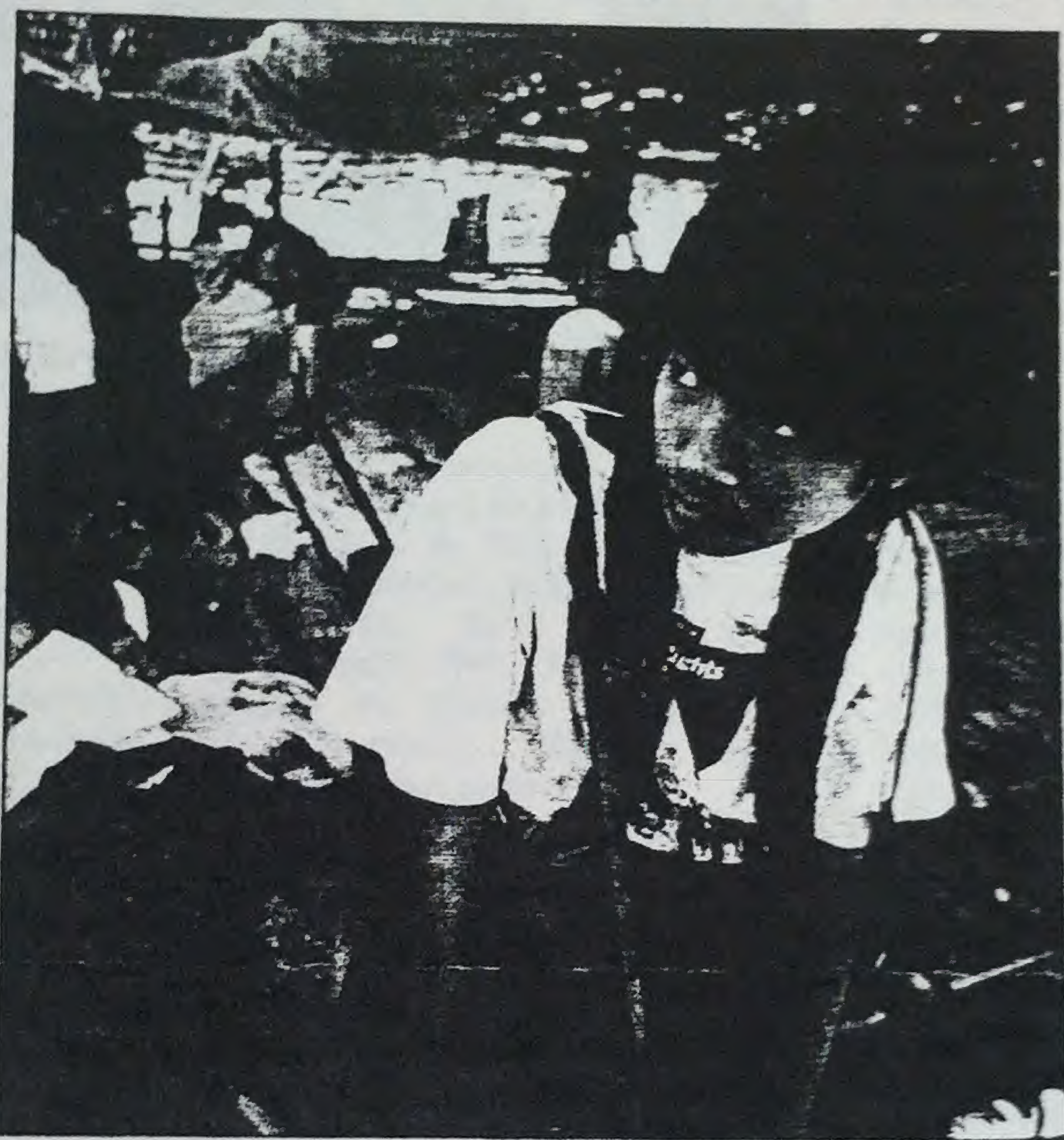
But most foreign observers think that is unlikely. Rangoon-based diplomats believe the government-in-exile will be short-lived, and that its formation will trigger a wave of arrests and cripple the League. "The [new government] won't make any difference any which way," says one foreign analyst. "The SLORC has intimidated everybody." Commented one Bangkok-based Western diplomat: "Even if you are sympathetic and have an open mind, they (the Manerplaw MPs) are starting from a bleak position. They'll have to be able to demonstrate support in Burma. Otherwise people will start calling the NCGUB a joke, and a bad joke at that."

Their fears may be well-founded. On the day the new government was announced, the League's Central Executive Committee in Rangoon expelled the eight MPs in the fledgling cabinet. A veteran Burmese activist in Bangkok says "the [League's] reaction was calculated. They had to save their necks and denounce the alternative government to avoid being de-registered by the military." The junta has ruthlessly jailed hundreds of opponents. All but a handful of the League's top leaders are under house arrest or behind bars. Rangoon recently revoked the registration of Sein Win's Party for National Democracy. The régime is now going after a score of MPs planning to join their colleagues in Manerplaw.

Still, the provisional government cannot be ignored. Its link-up with Burma's minorities was unprecedented and symbolically significant. It was the first time since Gen. Ne Win grabbed power in 1962 that elected Burmese officials had joined hands with the minorities to oppose the military and support a federal union giving minorities autonomous powers. And by forging an alliance with the minorities, the provisional government hopes to erode the morale of Rangoon soldiers indoctrinated to believe they are fighting non-Burman insurgents. Now they will be fighting Burmese officials, many of whom received votes

from the military in May.

And despite their party's official rejection, the Manerplaw MPs seem to have broad League support. Win Ko, an MP from Sagaing Division, says League torchbearer Aung San Suu Kyi had told the League's Central Executive Committee to "do whatever is necessary to carry out the will of the people." Many MPs resented the Committee's unwillingness to convene a parliament. The more cautious Committee members feared a backlash after the régime announced Order 1/90 in July. The vaguely worded



A student guerilla in training: "We are not sitting idle"

document stated that the junta would continue as the de facto government until a constitution was drafted. It also threatened party members with arrest if they refused to comply. Despite the misgivings of some on the Committee, the League drafted the so-called Gandhi Declaration, which called for an assembly of all elected MPs by September.

That never happened. Instead, some 100 League MPs met and issued a statement denouncing Order 1/90. The document, later endorsed by about 250 MPs, also reaffirmed support for the Gandhi Declaration. At the same meeting they floated a plan to declare a provisional government in Mandalay, with or without the CEC's consent. Senior monks in Mandalay also agreed to support the proposed administration, vowing to position 5,000 clerics around the MPs on

Oct. 9. After the Mandalay meeting more than 200 MPs designated seven members to represent them and take whatever action they thought necessary.

But by the first week of October the main temples in Mandalay had been surrounded by tanks, gun-mounted jeeps and hundreds of soldiers. On Oct. 18 the seven MPs cancelled the plan, agreeing instead to declare a government in a frontier area. Four days later Rangoon launched a massive crackdown against Mandalay monks, who were refusing to minister Buddhist rituals to military personnel. Dozens of League MPs were jailed. Maung Ko, an Executive Committee member, was allegedly tortured to death for withholding information on the monks' activities and the Mandalay meetings. At month's end, Rangoon called members of all political parties down to the National Intelligence Bureau to sign Order 1/90.

The new opposition leader did not attend the Mandalay sessions and actually opposed the plan to declare a government there. Nevertheless, Sein Win was still very much in the picture. The Mandalay MPs had whittled down their choice of leader to two names: Sein Win and Khin Maung Swe, a League member who was arrested in late October. Sein Win may well have been chosen even if his rival had not been jailed. His background appeals to Burmese, who judge politicians on the basis of family lineage. Sein Win's uncle was Burma's independence hero Aung San (*see box*). In fact, many believe the introverted mathematics teacher is the best the country has to offer after Aung San's outspoken daughter Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been under house arrest since July 1989.

For now, the alliance between the League and the minority groups fighting Rangoon "has all the symbolic strengths and practical weaknesses," says one Western analyst who was in Manerplaw last week. "The forming of the alternative government is the first shift towards a workable symbiosis between the Burmese and the minorities. This is a psychological blow. The Burmese army won't be the same." Still, in the past eighteen months Rangoon's troops have wiped out eight Karen camps along



Sein Win (2nd from r.) with MPs in Manerplaw: "This man has guts" Geoffrey Klaverkamp — Asiaweek

LEADERS

The Making of an Activist



The head of Burma's government-in-exile was wrestling with mathematical theory in Hamburg, Germany, when he had his first brush with the Burmese military. Of-

fering no explanation, the authorities told Sein Win to cut short his doctoral studies and return home. He ignored the order, and Rangoon refused to renew his passport. Finally, after nine years of studies and a stint as a restaurant dishwasher, Sein Win left Europe. He taught at Sri Lanka's Colombo University and Kenya's Nairobi University. Eventually his longing to see Burma again overcame fear of reprisals.

In 1984, armed with a fake passport, he returned home. "[The military] doesn't trust anybody who has been away too long," says Sein Win. Indeed, he was interrogated, charged with illegal entry and locked up in Rangoon's infamous Insein Jail for nine months. After his release, he applied for a job at Rangoon University but never received an answer because "they were afraid to have me."

In 1985 Sein Win became a part-time lecturer at the less prestigious Workers' College in Rangoon. Despite his growing antipathy towards

the régime, he avoided a public role. Not that he was a stranger to politics. His father, U Ba Win, was the older brother of Burma's independence hero Aung San. Both men were assassinated in 1947. "Morally I never accepted the military government," Sein Win explains. "But my opposition was always passive."

That changed in 1988, when the military shot thousands of pro-democracy demonstrators and shut down the universities. "There comes a point where you feel you have to do something," Sein Win says. "I couldn't sit back doing nothing." When the National League for Democracy was declared a party in 1989, Sein Win signed up as a member. Shortly after, his cousin, fiery League torchbearer Aung San Suu Kyi, chose him to head the newly formed Party for National Democracy. The party was intended as a backup in case the military dissolved the NLD. He easily won a parliamentary seat in the May polls.

When opposition MPs chose isolated Manerplaw as the site for their provisional government, Sein Win, 47, set off for the jungle, leaving behind his wife of one year. "I said if they couldn't find another person to lead the movement I wouldn't mind," he says. "But I never dreamed of becoming prime minister." Despite his obvious reluctance to lead, he seems to have wide support. "We know why the MPs wanted Sein Win as their leader," says Mandalay representative Peter Limbin. "This man has guts." ■

the border. And the military recently bought medium-sized tanks, anti-aircraft guns, patrol boats, short-range F-7 jet fighters and a variety of missiles and howitzers from China.

What happens next? Not surprisingly, the members of Sein Win's government are jittery about disclosing plans. A combination of measures is being considered. These include: spreading propaganda through the League's labyrinthine networks; organising civil disobedience campaigns such as labour strikes; coordinating guerilla attacks against the Rangoon army with Karen, Kachin and other minority armies; gaining moral and financial support from Burmese expatriate communities and, especially, foreign governments. The Manerplaw MPs have already contacted foreign embassies in Bangkok. At least one Western embassy has pledged some financial support.

Thailand's recognition of the Manerplaw government is considered crucial. When Arthit Urairat became Thailand's foreign minister in December he promised to review his country's Burma policy, which steers a careful course between respect for Rangoon's sovereignty and concern about human-rights violations. But analysts don't expect Arthit to make any drastic changes. Some Thai businessmen favour links with a democratic and free-enterprise neighbour. Other factions, including Thailand's influential military, are staunchly pro-Rangoon. Still, Bangkok has traditionally cultivated ties with all warring groups in neighbouring countries so as to maintain influence should a change in government occur.



Suu Kyi Dominic Faulder — Bureau Bangkok

Regardless of Thailand's position, the Manerplaw government has a hard slog ahead. If Rangoon's record is anything to go by, the junta will stop at nothing to protect its interests. The Manerplaw MPs have already been declared fugitives, and, according to Burma's Intelligence Chief Khin Nyunt, the régime "will take action against anyone who goes against the law." Still, in his jungle stronghold Sein Win brims with determination. "We have not come here empty-handed," he says. "We came here with our program and agenda in hand and we are going to see that they are put into motion. So please rest assured. We are not sitting idle." ■

Soviet Union — or to lure Japan into economic cooperation as a prelude to improved relations under which other issues can be resolved it will be a "dialogue without a meeting point," a Japanese official source told the REVIEW.

The idea of de-linking a Japan-Soviet peace treaty from the northern islands issue is also vehemently opposed by the Japanese Foreign Ministry. The ministry harbours suspicions that the working party on the conclusion of a peace treaty, set up after former Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze's 1988 visit to Japan to "listen to Japan's views," may represent an attempt to undermine the hard line on linkage.

The most that Gorbachov may do, it is feared, is to revert to the 1956 offer of returning the two smaller islands. This offer was effectively withdrawn in 1960 after Japan revised its security arrangements with the US and the Soviets unilaterally issued a statement calling for removal of US bases from Japan. This statement has never been officially withdrawn.

Foreign Ministry sources say Japan could never prejudice the security of its four major islands — Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu and Shikoku — in return for a deal on the four minor islands if Moscow were to try and make territorial concessions dependent upon the US military presence.

Nishihara believes that the minimum acceptable offer Gorbachov can bring to Tokyo in April is a 1956-plus formula. This would involve restoring the offer to return the two smaller islands, plus a recognition of Japanese sovereignty over the others and an agreement to negotiate a date for their return.

The Soviet Union is anxious to import Japanese industrial and construction machinery as well as consumer goods, according to the Keidanren. But unlike France and Germany, where the Soviets are able to achieve a trade surplus through exports of oil and gas, they usually have a deficit in their trade with Japan.

The Supreme Soviet last year passed a law decreeing convertibility of the rouble. Japanese businessmen say this will take several years to achieve and in the meantime they do not wish to accept roubles in payment for capital or consumer goods. They also complain of severe problems in securing foreign currency payments from Moscow in return for Japanese goods.

The view of Japanese business lobbies is that even if a Soviet initiative on the islands were to open the door to major flows of Japanese concessional loans and Exim Bank finance for the Soviets, cooperation between the two countries would still lack an economic rationale in all but a relatively few areas. ■ Anthony Rowley

Army tightens grip while promising change Bans and bribes

By Bertil Lintner in Bangkok

Taking advantage of the distraction provided by the Gulf War, Burma's ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) has arrested some of the few opposition figures who remain at large, banned some political parties and, in its own inimitable style, mixed repression with vague promises of a possible liberalisation in the future.

An editorial in the government-controlled *Working People's Daily* on 8 February made the surprising promise that the SLORC would relinquish power after approving a new constitution drawn up by political and other representatives. But the newspaper failed to indicate how, or to whom, the transfer would be made. In the meantime, the government continues to harass potential opponents while bribing others to toe the line.

The Party for National Democracy (PND) was banned on 20 December 1990 because its chairman, Sein Win, had fled to the Thai border and set up a parallel government together with almost a dozen MPs elected from the main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD). On 1 February, the SLORC-approved elections commission also deregistered the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) and arrested its secretary-general, Cho Cho Kyaw Nyein.

Unlike the PND, the AFPFL, which had borrowed its name from Burma's first political party set up after World War II, had not won any seats in the May 1990 election. But Cho Cho Kyaw Nyein, the daughter of a powerful politician of the original AFPFL in the 1950s, was accused of having links with "outlawed rebel groups" — a possible reference to her contacts with dissident students in the border areas. She is now in Rangoon's Insein Jail.

On 4 February the League for Democracy and Peace (LDP), the party of Burma's last democratically elected prime minister, U Nu, was also banned. Like the AFPFL, the LDP won no seats in last year's election. But U Nu's son U Aung, a US citizen, has been active organising armed resistance along the Thai border since the pro-democracy

uprising in 1988, which could explain the action taken by Rangoon.

The fourth party to be banned was the Mandalay-based National Politics Front for Youth (NPFY), which won three seats in May 1990. Its parent party, the National Politics Front, was banned in September 1989 — officially for maintaining links with the now defunct Communist Party of Burma. The same reason was cited for the ban of the NPFY.

The banning of these political parties is largely symbolic, since all open political activity was effectively curtailed when the SLORC began its latest crackdown in September last year (REVIEW, 13 Sept. '90). Far more important are the continuing arrests of Buddhist monks and other dissidents, and the state-controlled press reports almost daily accounts of senior SLORC officials

presenting colour TV sets and other gifts to senior monks who remain loyal to the military regime.

"The last hope was pinned on the monks," a diplomat said. "No Burmese thought that the military would dare turn against the best-respected segment of Burmese society. But monasteries have been raided, hundreds of monks have been arrested or disrobed, including some very senior monks, and other abbots have been bribed into submission. That was when the opposition against

the SLORC finally ran out of steam. Today, all overt political civity in Burma is dead."

In late January a small group of Thai journalists were invited by the SLORC to witness a drug-burning ceremony in Burma's northeastern Shan state and to interview the acting NLD leaders, chairman Aung Shwe and secretary Lwin. However, in an unusually strong editorial, the Thai English-language *Bangkok Post* newspaper said on 6 February: "The statements given by the two NLD leaders, apparently prepared and devoid of any direct criticism against the ruling regime, left the distinct impression that for a long time to come there would probably be no room for an opposition role. [The opposition and other dissidents] either toe the government line or find themselves ending up in detention cells for real or imagined offences."



Exiled Sein Win.

Some 10 foreign oil companies have signed production sharing agreements with Burma and have started drilling test wells

Rangoon Steps Up Oil Exploration

PR/SA/BA - 46

By MIN THU

RANGOON (Depthnews) -- Burma appears to be taking steps to protect itself from energy dislocations caused by events outside its control like the conflict triggered off by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

The country, in recent months, has initiated both hydroelectric and oil drilling projects to strengthen its self-reliance in energy.

Some 10 foreign oil companies have signed production sharing agreements with Burma and have started drilling test wells. The companies, which come from seven countries, have paid signature bonuses of about US\$50 million.

Burmese Energy Minister Vice Admiral Maung Maung Khin, who is also a member of the ruling military State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), said the companies decided to invest in the oil exploration venture as prospects are good.

In the first three years, designated as exploration period, the foreign firms would be investing some US\$321 million as minimum requirement. Otherwise, the unspent portion would have to be surrendered to the Burmese government, an energy planning department official said.

The exploration period can be extended twice for a period of one year each. Investing firms would have to surrender 25 percent of the block they had contracted to enable negotiations with new firms that might be interested, the official said.

-more-

Details of agreement signed between the firms and SLOK for production sharing were explained to newsmen recently.

Under the agreements providing for "fair and equitable returns," contracting firms have to pay 10 percent royalty to the government and would have to pay a production bonus.

The bonus would be US\$2 million for a yield of 10,000 barrels a day (BPD); US\$3 million for 30,000 BPD; US\$4 million for 50,000 BPD; US\$5 million for 100,000 BPD; and US\$10 million for 200,000 BPD and above, according to Director-General Tin Tun of the Department of Energy Planning.

He said production sharing ratio was also in Burma's favour. The country would get some 70 to 90 percent of the yield while the foreign firms would retain only 10 to 30 percent.

Contracting firms are also required, under the agreements, to transfer technical knowhow to the Burmese, invest in further research, and help import fuel oils and lubricants needed by the country.

The oil firms which have signed onshore oil production agreements are the United States' Amoco and Unical, Canada's PetroCanada, Dutch Shell, Australia's BHP, Japan's Idemitsu, South Korea's Yukong and the United Kingdom's Croft and Kirkland.

Burma has divided the onshore oil area into 14 geological basins and plains. So far, the government has been working only in three areas and exploration has started in the Irrawaddy Delta.

The foreign firms will work in the other areas.

Burma began offshore oil exploration with foreign firms in 1972. The government continued the work ~~even~~ when foreign firms withdrew, using state funds.

These earlier production efforts have resulted in a daily yield of 15,000 barrels of crude per day, sufficient for the country's needs if used wisely and efficiently.

There had been some imports of fuel oils and lubricants for World Bank-assisted projects and foreign oil firms that would be using them in their exploration activities.

As for the hydroelectric program, Burma is starting with five projects which will cost the state some US\$1317.55 million. The projects are intended to beef up Burma's present hydroelectric capacity and supply to meet projected needs after 1993-94.

Existing facilities have a capacity of only 700 megawatts which, according to General Than Shwe, is very, very low. The general is the chairman of the special projects implementation committee and the number two official in the SLORC.

The new projects, when completed, would add some 635.2 megawatts of hydroelectric energy.

It is estimated that the projects will require a foreign exchange component of about US\$801 million.

The planned hydroelectric facilities would help irrigate some 80,000 to 140,000 farmlands.

Burma plans to build two more facilities, with a 100 megawatt capacity, by 1993. Japan is expected to help finance these projects.

An energy official has explained that Burma's electricity requirements at present are met through hydro, gas, steam and thermal generators. It is believed that, in the long run, hydroelectricity is the cheapest source.

The five planned projects include four purely hydroelectric facilities and one multipurpose dam. Some of the feasibility studies for the projects were conducted as early as 1953. The Norwegian government, Asian Development Bank and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) collaborated in some of the studies. - Depthnews Asia

THE NATION

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CHINA
INDIA
MALAYSIA
THAILAND
JULY 21

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It has already begun. The once lush greenery of the Burmese border regions is turning a brittle yellow. The once untouched tropical hardwood forests are thinning out. The climate is changing. The crops are failing. In this way the eastern border of Burma is beginning to resemble the ravaged environment of its Thai neighbour.

A

derline case

A combination of the deforestation in Thailand, just a few kilometres away, minority cutting and, to a greater extent, the logging concessions awarded to Thai logging companies by the Burmese military government are to blame, say the border inhabitants.

With the nation-wide logging ban that was declared in 1988 by the Thai government, Thai logging companies began a rush to the border to exploit Burmese forests. Although, also illegal here, the conflicts and minority control in the border areas made these laws virtually unenforceable.

In 1989 the Burmese military government awarded 30 Thai logging companies about 40 cutting concessions — legalizing previous activities in return for fees paid by the logging companies. It is estimated, by Thai customs officials on the Burmese border, that in the last two years since the Thai companies began large scale cutting in Burma, over half-a-million felled trees have crossed the

border. Independent satellite pictures taken of Burma last year suggest that the rate of deforestation in Burma is the third-highest in the world.

However the damage to the forest is far more widespread than the actual trunks that are transported across the border. Although the Thai logging companies claim that they select only mature trees for cutting, many smaller trees are also destroyed.

"Since the concessions we are having increasingly frequent forest fires. This dry season alone we had three very large fires. It is not only because it is becoming more dry but also when they cut down one large tree, several small trees are felled because they are in the path of its fall.

"The companies don't clean up after themselves and the splinters and undergrowth cause the fires," said a high-ranking Karen National Union official based at one of the major logging regions of Methamine KNU headquarters across the border from Kanchanaburi.

This sudden destruction of the environment has had some radical effects on the lives of the people

Deforestation is threatening not only forests within Thailand but also those across the border in Burma. And the culprits are, once again, Thai logging companies, reports Evelyn Girardet, with photos by Chamlong Boonsong.

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This sudden destruction of the environment has had some radical effects on the lives of the people living in the areas where most of the cutting is occurring.

The majority of concessions are within the Karen territory, across the border from Sai Yok district of Kanchanaburi and, further north, The Karen's who have always been forest dwellers believe that their lives have become more difficult as a direct result of the cutting.

"In the last few years, the

"In the last few years there have been many changes in the climate here. Every year we have less rain and it becomes hotter. When I first came here five years ago there were so many streams and rivers running through this area that it was sometimes difficult to travel to the next town. But in the last three years they have all been drying up," said Daphne Tun Baw, a teacher in Menam village, about 15 kms from the Thai border.

CONTINUED on page C2

Freshly felled trunks on
their way to Thailand

According to the KNU official, he did not want to give his name, the Methamine area had an average annual rainfall of 60-80 inches when he first went there eight years ago. For the last two years, however, the people felt fortunate if they had 30-40 inches.

"There used to be at least seven months of rain every year but about four years ago everything began to change. This area was severely affected by the deforestation in Thailand and the cutting here is making the situation worse and worse. People are finding it more difficult to earn their daily bread," he said.

According to the official, the small scale hill cultivation the area civilians depend on for their food, has been less successful recently and the fish that have ways been the people's main source of protein are disappearing as the streams dry up.

At the same time the Karen people's lives are entwined with the jungle. "The honey that the area are renowned for, the dyes for their clothes, and the herbs used for most of their medication come from the jungle. In losing the jungle they will also lose all these things," said the official.

"This area was the land of plenty. We had enough of everything — the jungle was full of wild life that we could hunt. There were streams and rivers running through every part of the area. The jungle was green and fertile, the area was more powerful than the Thai. But now the area is impoverished. The jungle is badly damaged and the rivers have dried up. The people are now starving and the area is a wasteland."



General Sit Maung believes that logging concessions are a way to save the forests.

longer what they were. The KNU official feels that the future of his people and their jungle is filled with foreboding. "If there is no more jungle there will be no more Karen people," he stated.

There is an old Karen proverb that says "If we eat from the land, we have to protect the land. If we drink the water we have to care for the water." This awareness by the people about their environment has provoked strong reaction by the civilian population to large-scale cutting by Thai companies.

"They cannot cut everywhere. The Karen people have demanded that some areas remain forest and wildlife reserves. The KNU policies may be willing to permit logging everywhere in the Karen territory but the Karen people care about the forest," said the official. In the last six months there has been much pressure by the Karen civilian population on the leader, who is preserving the jungle. They have made several demands. For them security the people want five more areas to which they will be



Once the land of plenty, the Karen territory is drying up and it is getting more difficult for people here to earn their living.

able to escape if the Burmese forces invade this area. They also want one 165-square-mile area of forest reserve to serve as a wildlife sanctuary because they realize that much of the exotic wildlife that lives in this area would disappear.

At the same time, the official claims, although it could be a good way for the Karen to earn a living, none of the people living here are

working with the Thai companies to cut the trees. "The people just do not want to destroy their forests in this way. It goes against their nature," he said.

However it seems the Karen have little choice in what is happening to their surroundings.

"The logging concessions have put us in a very bad position because we have no other choice."

fuse them. We do not want to allow them to destroy the forest but living here on the border, Thailand is the only way we have of reaching the outside world. In many ways we are dependent on the Thais' goodwill and making enemies of powerful logging companies is not the best way to keep it.

"Our supplies have to keep coming through the border and we have refugees on the Thai side whom we want protected. If we refuse — the Thais access to our forests it is possible that it will affect these things," said the official.

He reasons that if the Thai borders are closed to the Karen they will not be able to continue the revolution that they have been waging against the Burmese government for more than 40 years.

At the same time, it is to a large extent the Thai logging concessions that are helping the Karen's keep their revolution alive. In addition to the fee that Thai companies must pay the Burmese military government, they must also pay taxes to each minority group in whose territory they are cutting. According to border customs officials in 1990, the KNU earned more than B14,000 million from logging taxes.

At the same time, Burmese officials maintain that the logging concessions have actually put a stop to much of the environmental destruction that has been going on along the Thai/Burmese border.

"When we took over this area the forests were already gone. It had nothing to do with the concession agreement. There were 30 sawmills in this area alone which we closed down," said General Sit Maung, a Burmese military leader based across the border from Three Pagodas Pass.

Continued from page C1

A Thai logging company's bounty at the Three Pagodas Pass

According to the KNU official, he did not want to give his name, but the area had an average annual rainfall of 60-80 inches when he first went there eight years ago. For the last two years, however, the people felt fortunate if they had 30-40 inches.

"There used to be at least seven months of rain every year but about four years ago everything began to change. This area was very strongly affected by the deforestation in Thailand and the cutting here is making the situation worse and worse. People are finding it more difficult to earn their daily bread," he said.

According to the official, the small scale hill cultivation the Karen civilians depend on for their food, has been less successful recently and the fish that have always been the people's main source of protein are disappearing as the streams dry up.

At the same time the Karen people's lives are entwined with the jungle. "The honey that the Karen are renowned for, the dyes for their clothes, and the herbs used for most of their medication come from the jungle. In losing the jungle they will also lose all these things," said the official.

"This area was the land of plenty. We had enough of everything — the jungle was full of wildlife that we could hunt. There were streams and rivers running through every part of this area. Everything was green and fertile. The jungle was once more powerful than man. But that has changed. Now man is overpowering the jungle," said Loong Raddy who has lived here for more than 20 years. He does not know that the cutting is at fault. All he knows is that his surroundings are no



General Sit Maung believes Thai logging concessions are a way to save the forests.

longer what they were.

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Horn craze destroying Chinese

NEIL FLEMING
UPI

The worldwide ban on international rhino horn trading has had an ironic spin-off in China, where it has provoked the wholesale destruction of some of the country's priceless art treasures.

Rhinoceros horn is highly prized in China for use in traditional medicines.

The Chinese ran out of rhinoceroses of their own some time before 100 AD. Since then, the horn habit

visited the People's Republic of China last year he found the medicinal rhino horn industry alive and well and printing its instructions for rhino horn pills in English.

On the ingredients list, in among

has caused a cultural tragedy, Bradley Martin discovered. On a tour of government controlled medicine factories, he was shown storerooms containing hundreds of beautifully carved Ming and Ching dynasty cups, brush-holders, statu-

\$150,000 on the international market. This compares with the current black market rhino horn price of about \$900 a pound.

"How they can destroy things like this I don't know," Chapman told United Press International.

The Karens have been fighting for survival since 1929 when they

Associated Press

THE NATION | Tuesday April 2, 1991

PRISA/BA-49

Rangoon troops and jets advance on Karen HQ

Guerrillas: 20 civilians killed in bombing runs

Pawlar

Mano Bat

BURMESE troops backed by jets and helicopters have advanced on guerrilla positions within a few miles of Manerplaw, headquarters of the Karen insurgency and dissident politicians.

Thai and Karen military sources said yesterday that at least 20 guerrillas and up to 70 soldiers were killed as government forces took a rebel outpost in thick jungle 170 km north of here over the weekend. They expected more battles soon.

"There were no jets on Sunday, only helicopters which flew into the area to supply ammunition and picked up the wounded," one officer of the Karen ethnic minority said.

Rangoon has vowed to smash the Karen guerrillas, one of a dozen insurgencies against the central Burmese government since independence more than 40 years ago. This year troops have been backed by air strikes for the first time.

Thai military sources said some 4,000 Karen had retreated from their outposts to defend Manerplaw, the minority's headquarters in the Karen heartland of eastern Burma.

After several years of being pummeled the Karen hold only a handful of bases along the Thai-Burmese border, once a major source of revenue for the rebels but now largely under government control.

Diplomats said the use of aircraft during this dry season's offensive could give the edge to government forces usually facing problems of communication and supply during such missions.

Sources differed over what aircraft were used during the assault. Karen officers said they believed they were Chinese-made F-7s recently supplied by Beijing. Thai military officers said the aircraft were more likely to be slower Yugoslav G-4 aircraft.

Planes were used for the first time three weeks ago when they bombed Phaw Hta, an outpost 37 km north of Manerplaw. Guerrillas who fled the camp were now fighting to get it back, one Karen official said.

Karen sources said at least 600 government soldiers had on Saturday overrun their outpost of Thipavicho, 10 km north of Manerplaw.

It was not clear whether Manerplaw itself, a sprawling camp of wooden huts populated mainly by off-duty soldiers and senior Karen figures, had come under attack.

Manerplaw, until this year safe from the government's ground offensives, is also home to a coalition of ethnic rebels and dissident politicians and students who have fled crackdowns in government-held parts of Burma.

Associated Press adds: Burmese government warplanes have killed civilians in bombing runs meant to root out guerrillas concealed by jungle, guerrilla

officials said yesterday.

Burmese troops and Karen guerrillas have clashed in the past week north of Burma's Salween River, said one Karen official, reached by telephone at the Thai frontier. He spoke on condition of anonymity.

"They cannot find us, so they bomb the villages nearby," the official said.

Inhabitants of one village, Mopa, told the guerrillas that 20 villagers had been killed in bombing about a week ago, this official said. The fighting had driven about 1,000 people from their homes to take refuge in the jungle, he added.

Up to 300 Karen civilians had reportedly fled to refugee camps just inside Thailand in the past week.

A Karen official said the ground battles, around the district of Phaw Hta, had killed one guerrilla fighter and wounded up to eight others.

Gen Saw Maung, the head of the Rangoon junta, said in a speech last Wednesday that most of the diverse insurgent groups were disintegrating.

The army had been able to eliminate one Karen stronghold after another, and "the remaining camps will also fall into our hands in the not too distant future," he said.

The Karens have been fighting for survival since 1989, when the Burmese army began a concerted campaign to drive them from bases on the Thai border that they had used to control trade.

JACK ANDERSON and DALE VAN ATTA

Big Oil and the Burmese Military

There is one TV commercial you can bet two big U.S. oil companies are never going to make. It would show the investments of Amoco and Unocal being protected by Myanmar's brutal military—the same military presiding over one of the world's worst human rights records.

These two U.S. oil companies are among 10 international firms that have invested in Myanmar's future oil deposits and are exploring under contract with the ruling military government. An Amoco spokesman justified its involvement in Myanmar, formerly Burma, by saying that oil companies must "go where the reserves or prospective basins are."

Others believe that big oil is unwittingly abetting in the abuses taking place in Myanmar.

Ironically, the situation occurs in the wake of free democratic elections last year won by a pro-democracy movement. But instead of bringing freedom to the people, the elections triggered a horrifying military backlash.

Amoco has been exploring a part of Myanmar that is only a few hundred miles from the Kachin rebel insurgents, who are counted as one of the best guerrilla armies in the world. The thuggish Burmese military is serving as a protection force for the oil company.

A spokesman for Amoco told us that while there is a military presence in the area, it is not providing security for Amoco. However, sources told our reporter Richard Ward that the contrary is true. Soe Win, first secretary of the Myanmar Embassy in Washington, said that Amoco installations were not only safe, but that the company also enjoys total

protection by the military—even down to providing transportation. "They [Amoco] wouldn't be able to get around without us," Win said.

Use of the military for security has stirred a controversy among human rights activists. Amnesty International's report on human rights abuses of the Burmese military details forced labor and conscription of 14-year-olds in the fight against the insurgents, as well as mass executions and starvation. The reason offered by the government for the execution of slave laborers is that if they were left behind when a job was done, they might report the army's whereabouts to the rebels.

Meanwhile, there are alarming reports that Myanmar's government is stockpiling modern weapons. The government has just cut a \$1 billion deal with China for planes, tanks and other weapons. They also have been amassing chemical weapons, prompting the State Department to include Myanmar on its list of countries with worrisome chemical weapons programs.

Since Myanmar faces no external threats, sources believe the chemical weapons are intended for use against its own population.

Congress has passed legislation requiring President Bush to impose trade sanctions on Myanmar if it doesn't relinquish power to the elected party. But the latest out of Myanmar suggests there will be no democracy.

Even if trade sanctions go into effect, many believe they will not affect lucrative exploration by the oil companies that are enjoying the Burmese military's protection.

Wed. July 10, 1991
*Peaceful Progress
In Myanmar*

p. A20

The article "Big Oil and the Burmese Military" [op-ed, May 29] was at variance with the true situation. With the return to the legal fold of some insurgent groups, including a Kachin insurgent group, peace and security have been realized in borders of Myanmar for the first time in decades. Contrary to the article's assertion, Kachin insurgents exist only in the remotest regions with their backs to the wall. Amoco or any other oil company has nothing to fear from them.

More and more international businesses are becoming aware of Myanmar's potential and are availing themselves of mutually beneficial opportunities. While ensuring peace and stability to the nation, the Myanmar government—in accordance with its conditions, culture and tradition—is laying a firm foundation for a democratic society and for the future peace, stability and prosperity of the country.

The allegations of human rights abuse, forced labor, "conscription of 14-year-olds," mass executions and starvation are groundless. The Myanmar government has cooperated and is cooperating with the U.N. human rights mechanism to dispel these speculations.

KYAW THU

First Secretary
Embassy of the Union of Myanmar
Washington

The Washington Post

Baker Asks Asians to Move Warily on New Pacts

By PHILIP SHENON

Special to The New York Times

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia, July 24 — Secretary of State James A. Baker 3d urged major Southeast Asian countries today to move cautiously on proposals to create new trade and security alliances that would replace "tried and tested frameworks" involving the United States.

Speaking at the annual meeting of foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Mr. Baker appeared to react warily to proposals made at the meeting to create an East Asian trading bloc that did not include the United States, and to begin regular

regional meetings on military issues. He was also apprehensive about a suggestion that Soviet and Chinese representatives be included in future meetings of Asean, which is made up of Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei.

"We have had a remarkable degree of stability in this region," said Mr. Baker, referring specifically to security cooperation in Southeast Asia.

"We ought to be careful about changing those arrangements and discarding them for something else unless we're absolutely certain that the something else is better and will work," he said at a news conference.

While Mr. Baker received a warm reception this week from the Asean foreign ministers, a central theme of the Kuala Lumpur meeting was that the non-Communist nations of Southeast Asia must integrate their economic and security planning, even if that means asserting more independence from their old ally in Washington.

Asian diplomats said there was general agreement on the need for closer economic ties within Asean in response to trading blocs being created in Western Europe and in North America, and on the need for new cooperation on military issues in light of the reduced American presence in the region.

Not one of the proposals that had most worried American officials was adopted by the Asean foreign ministers at the meeting this week, although all remain under consideration.

Among them is a Japanese plan for formal regional meetings on defense issues. American officials say they are wary of the proposal because it might weaken a string of bilateral military agreements between the United States and nations in Asia and the Pacific. Like the United States, Japan is involved as a "dialogue partner."

The most serious disagreement between the United States and its Southeast Asian allies at the gathering appeared to center on Myanmar, formerly Burma, and whether economic sanctions should be imposed on that nation to end human rights abuses.

American and other Western nations

have for some time been urging Asean members to use their influence to persuade the Burmese to hand over power to civilians leaders elected last year.

"We would like to see Asean use whatever influence they have individually or collectively, in order to move the Burmese Government toward greater respect for human rights, greater respect for political process, freedom for political prisoners," Mr. Baker said.

Southeast Asian nations have been wary of Western attempts to impose human rights standards on Myanmar, if only because many of their own governments are also subject to criticism about human rights abuses.

Asean officials said today that the Philippine Foreign Secretary, Raul Manglapus, would soon travel to Myanmar on behalf of the association to dis-

cuss human rights. But Asian diplomats at the Kuala Lumpur meeting insisted that Mr. Manglapus's trip was not a response to Western pressure.

"This will be a cordial meeting between Manglapus and the Burmese," said one diplomat. "We believe that friendly, constructive persuasion — not bullying — will be most effective in bringing about change in Burma."

Several Asean officials drew comparisons this week between the association's policy on Burma and the Bush Administration's policy on China — continued contact despite concern over human rights violations.

At the news conference, Mr. Baker said the United States continued to hope for better relations with Vietnam, but that normal relations were not possible until Hanoi helped bring about a settlement in the Cambodian civil war.

PR/SA/BA-32

Baker Asks Asians to Move Warily on New Pacts

By PHILIP SHENON
Special to The New York Times

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia, July 24 — Secretary of State James A. Baker 3d urged major Southeast Asian countries today to move cautiously on proposals to create new trade and security alliances that would replace "tried and tested frameworks" involving the United States.

Speaking at the annual meeting of foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Mr. Baker appeared to react warily to proposals made at the meeting to create an East Asian trading bloc that did not include the United States, and to begin regular

regional meetings on military issues. He was also apprehensive about a suggestion that Soviet and Chinese representatives be included in future meetings of Asean, which is made up of Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei.

"We have had a remarkable degree of stability in this region," said Mr. Baker, referring specifically to security cooperation in Southeast Asia.

"We ought to be careful about changing those arrangements and discarding them for something else unless we're absolutely certain that the something else is better and will work," he said at a news conference.

While Mr. Baker received a warm reception this week from the Asean foreign ministers, a central theme of the Kuala Lumpur meeting was that the non-Communist nations of Southeast Asia must integrate their economic and security planning, even if that means asserting more independence from their old ally in Washington.

Asian diplomats said there was general agreement on the need for closer economic ties within Asean in response to trading blocs being created in Western Europe and in North America, and on the need for new cooperation on military issues in light of the reduced American presence in the region.

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on New Pacts

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Not one of the proposals that had most worried American officials was adopted by the Asean foreign ministers at the meeting this week, although all remain under consideration.

Among them is a Japanese plan for formal regional meetings on defense issues. American officials say they are wary of the proposal because it might weaken a string of bilateral military agreements between the United States and nations in Asia and the Pacific.

Like the United States, Japan is invited as a "dialogue partner."

The most serious disagreement between the United States and its Southeast Asian allies at the gathering appeared to center on Myanmar, formerly Burma, and whether economic sanctions should be imposed on that nation to end human rights abuses.

American and other Western nations

have for some time been urging Asean members to use their influence to persuade the Burmese to hand over power to civilians leaders elected last year.

"We would like to see Asean use whatever influence they have, individually or collectively, in order to move the Burmese Government toward greater respect for human rights, greater respect for political process, freedom for political prisoners," Mr. Baker said.

Southeast Asian nations have been wary of Western attempts to impose human rights standards on Myanmar, if only because many of their own governments are also subject to criticism about human rights abuses.

Asean officials said today that the Philippine Foreign Secretary, Raul Manglapus, would soon travel to Myanmar on behalf of the association to dis-

cuss human rights. But Asian diplomats at the Kuala Lumpur meeting insisted that Mr. Manglapus's trip was not a response to Western pressure.

"This will be a cordial meeting between Manglapus and the Burmese," said one diplomat. "We believe that friendly, constructive persuasion — not bullying — will be most effective in bringing about change in Burma."

Several Asean officials drew comparisons this week between the association's policy on Burma and the Bush Administration's policy on China — continued contact despite concern over human rights violations.

At the news conference, Mr. Baker said the United States continued to hope for better relations with Vietnam, but that normal relations were not possible until Hanoi helped bring about a settlement in the Cambodian civil war.

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shelling the KPNLF where troops could collect taxes.
stronghold.

Changing Buddha images spell bad omen for Burmese

by Jeremy Wagstaff
of Reuter

HUNDREDS of pilgrims are flocking to sites across Burma where images of Buddha are said to be showing mysterious signs, believers say augur ill for the political future, diplomats said yesterday.

Reports say the images appear to bleed, weep or change in shape, persuading superstitious Burmese that their two-year battle of wits with the military government will not end happily.

Diplomats said the manifestations may simply be a climatic oddity but for Burmese, facing an army determined to keep power despite an opposition election victory three months ago, they are an unprecedented portent of ill.

"Burmese take it very seriously. They see it as the worst possible omen," said one diplomat.

A tense stalemate which had hung over the country since the National League for Democracy's landslide win in May broke this month with scattered anti-army demonstrations and at least four killings in the northern town of Mandalay, others said.

UNREST

But they said the army, which took power nearly two years ago in the country's worst bloodbath since independence, had made clear it would not give in to public pressure for a civilian government.

Diplomats said the League had been accused in the state-run media of inciting the unrest. Extra troops had been sent to Rangoon and up to 500 activists arrested in the capital alone.

"I am increasingly pessimistic that anything is going to happen at all. Everything is hanging. It's going to take some major jolt for something to give," said one diplomat.

The League has rejected army demands for a drawn-out process of supervised constitutional changes before any new

government is formed and has called for the military to convene parliament next month.

The army has not acknowledged the League's demands, made after its first full meeting of successful candidates late last month. Diplomats said there was a sense of growing despair among ordinary Burmese that there would be any peaceful change, which helped spark the pilgrimages to the Buddhist shrines.

They quoted eyewitnesses as saying images of Buddha in a temple of a town north of Mandalay had begun swelling last week and the phenomenon had spread to Rangoon and other cities.

There was no clear scientific explanation for the swelling, said to appear in each image's left breast. In some cases the images — made of ivory, wood or marble — were reported to ooze fluid from the swelling or from the eyes, diplomats said.

Predominantly Buddhist Burma, isolated for much of the last 40 years, is one of Asia's most superstitious countries. Burmese believe General Ne Win, the country's secretive ruler, makes decisions based on advice from astrologers and his penchant for the number nine.

Diplomats said the phenomenon had threatened to become a rallying point for a country gripped by fear and despair.

Security forces in Rangoon had blocked off a street and confiscated several images of Buddha which had been visited by scores of Burmese.

No Burmese could recall such an occurrence, one diplomat said.

"Of course it's going to turn out to be a bad omen. If the government stays it's a bad omen and if it changes it's only going to be through violence so that's a bad omen too," said one envoy.

PR/SA/BA-53

BORNA I

HE Jewellery Exporters Association may have to lower its export targets for the year in the wake of the recent rise in oil prices stemming from the crisis in the Gulf.

Preeda Tiersuwan, the association's vice president, said the Middle East crisis had not only boosted oil prices but also gold prices, and had eroded the buying power of importing countries.

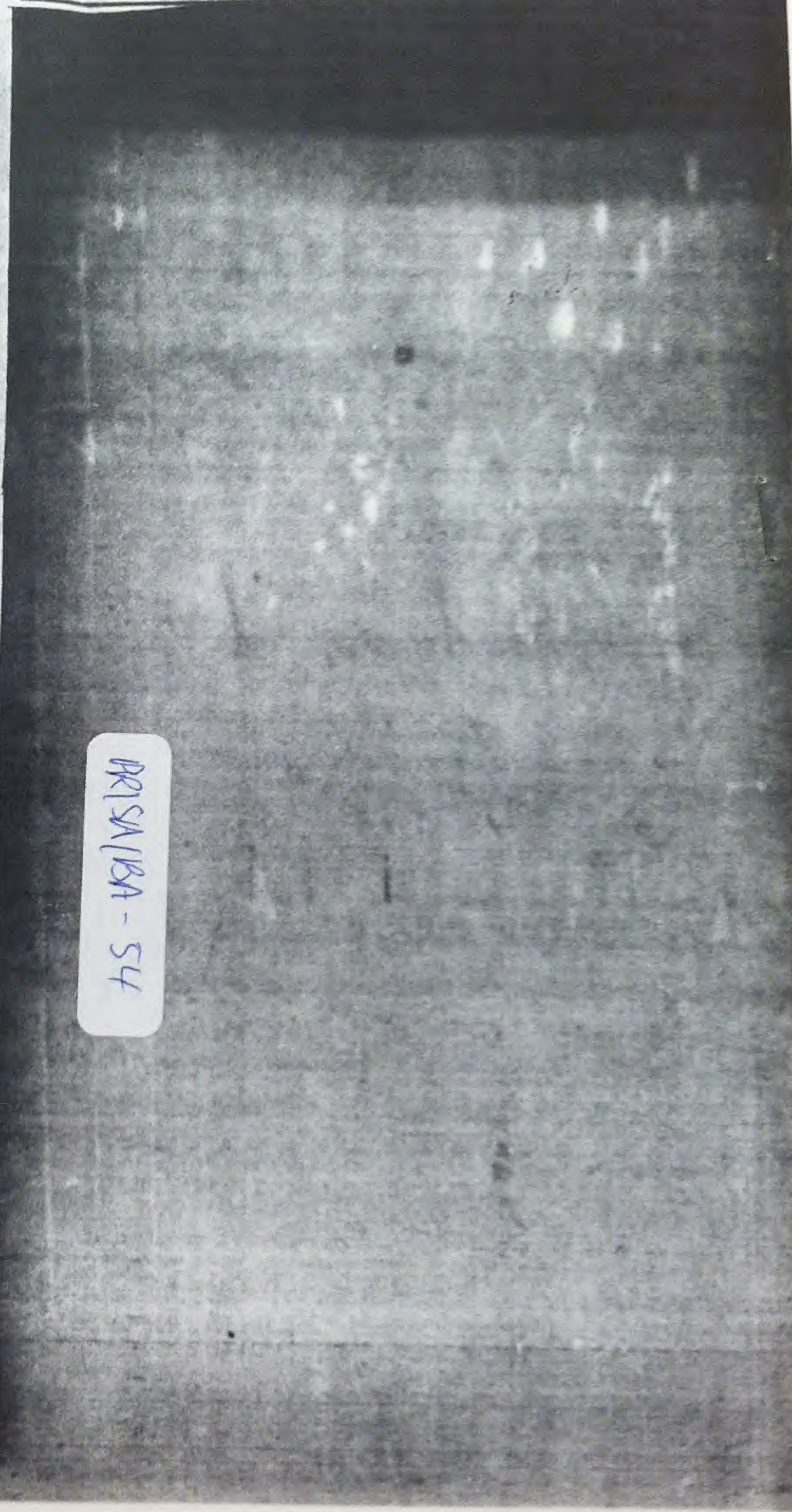
The association had forecast that Thailand would export Bt34 billion worth of gems this year, a growth rate of 20 per cent compared to last year.

Preeda said even gemstones, exports could be effected by the rise in gold and oil prices as energy costs account for around 0.25 per cent of the gem industry's production costs.

Meanwhile, energy accounts for about 35 per cent of gold bullion production costs. However, Preeda said that the purchasing power of importers might decrease if the Persian Gulf dispute continues and raw material prices increase as a result.

But local products will maintain their competitive edge over products from countries with more expensive labour forces such as Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore.

Preeda said that the volume of gemstones exported to the European countries could be affected.



Higher Burma fees endanger logging concessions

PISAK DHANASETTAKORN
The Nation

HAL forestry operators are at loggerheads with Burmese authorities over a proposal to increase their concession fees as part of an effort by the Burmese government to standardize rates among concessionaires.

Representatives from the Thai Foreign Logging Concessionaires Club and Burmese authorities are scheduled to meet later this month to negotiate a fee increase proposal. If the two sides fail to reach agreement on rises in concession fees, the concessions may be cancelled.

Last week, Santi Yakomvichitr, president of the Logging Concession-

aires Club and chairman of Santi Forestation Group, led a Thai delegation to Burma to hold further talks with the Burmese government, which is represented by the Myanmar Timber Enterprise (MTE).

But the talks failed to make any progress on negotiations held in late July when a team from Burma conducted a survey on the use of teak in Thailand.

A reliable source said the Burmese government insisted on raising the price of teak from the Shan State, opposite Mae Sariang District, from US\$200 a tonne to US\$260 a tonne. While teak from other parts of the country would cost US\$295. The Thai

representatives, meanwhile, were bargaining for between US\$240 and US\$250 a tonne.

Last week's meeting was the third time that Thai private sector operators had met with Burmese government officials. During the first two rounds of talks, Burma was seeking to raise the price of its teak to between US\$350 and US\$400 a tonne, but the Thai delegates said they were only prepared to pay between US\$220 and US\$240 a tonne.

The Burmese government has been seeking to bring the charges levied on Thai concessionaires into line with operators from other countries. To date, Burma has charged Thai conces-

sionaires lower rates than it levies on some other countries, putting Thai furniture exporters in a favourable position for teak exports.

"Thais should accept the new rate," stated a source with the Burmese authority.

Eighteen Thai companies, not including the government-owned Forest Industry Organisation, have gained a total of 49 logging concessions for Burma, but only eight companies will be subjected to the new concession rates — Union Par Co, Srin Technology Co, Thip Tam Thong Co, Muang Pana Co, Thai Pong Saw Mill Co, Sera International Co and Thai Teak Wood Vener Co.

Thai concessionaires have argued that all the teak they import from Burma is used only in Thailand. Consequently, they say, the rate increase should be suitable for the domestic market not the foreign market. Furthermore, some of the forestry firms sell their logs to furniture makers as opposed to undertaking the operation themselves.

"The Thai concessionaires have agreed to work on the Burmese government's proposal at a meeting to be held in Thailand before the end of this month," the source said.

The source added that the Thais have only two options, either they cancel the concession or accept the new charges.

BRISA/BA-54

BURMA I

Gem export may be hit

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Higher Burma fees

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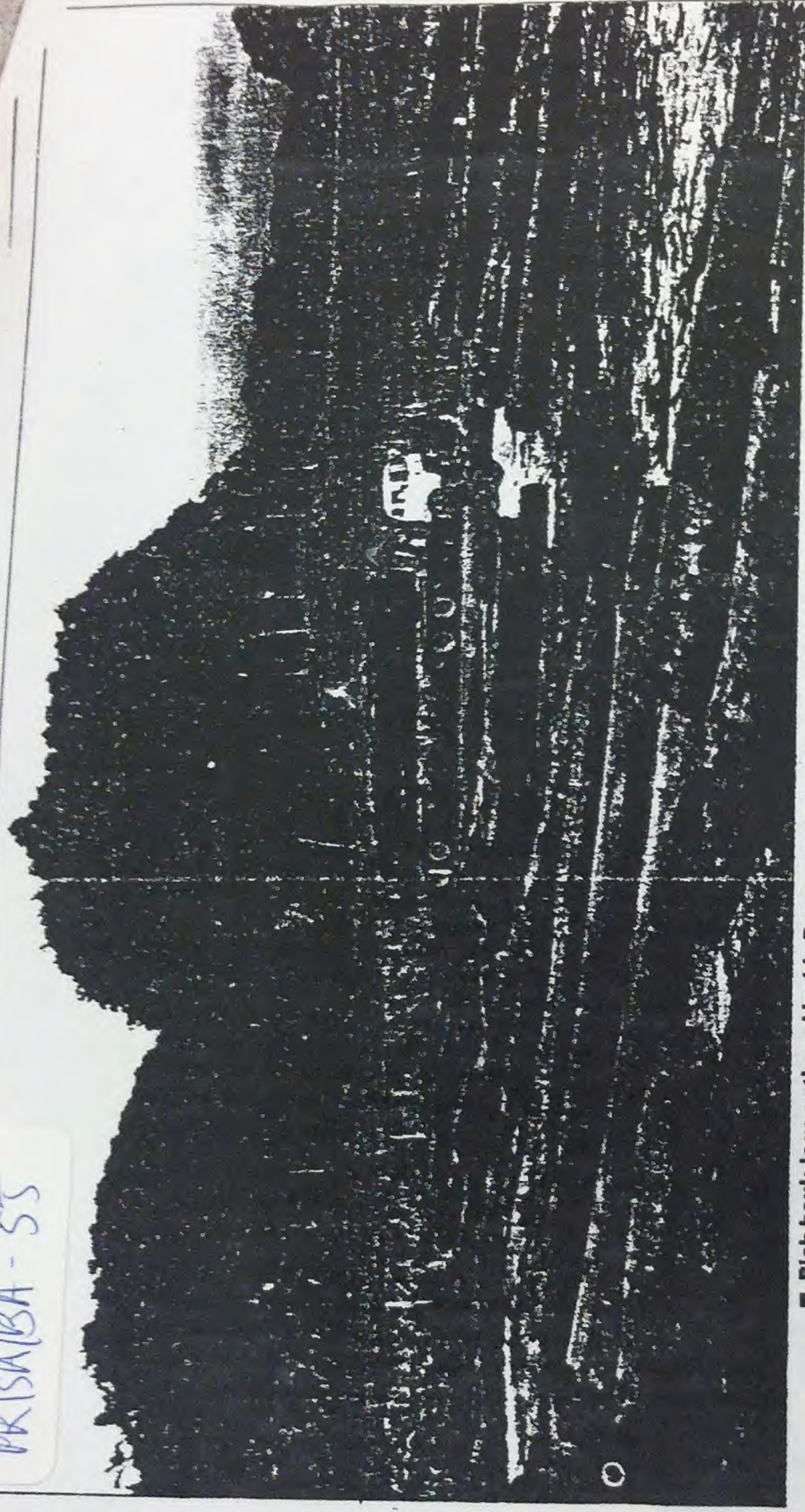
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BURMA

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Govt staff in log bribes face

PRISA/BA-55



■ Rich haul: logs gathered inside Burma opposite Kanchanaburi province wait to be carried into Thailand.

action, says top Forestry official

FORESTRY Department chief Phairot Suvanakorn concedes several department officials have helped coordinate illegal logging throughout the country, but legal and disciplinary action has been taken against officials found involved in corruption.

Logging firms involved in illegal activities usually seek out corrupt officials to work with, but not all department officials are corrupt, Mr Phairot said in an interview with the *Bangkok Post* yesterday.

"It is not only the Forestry Department's responsibility to oversee logging as many other government agencies should monitor the performance of their subordinates if they want this illegal activity to stop," he said.

He keeps a close watch on any illegal logging. Even if malfeasance cannot be proven, any department official whose behaviour indicates a hint

of corruption will be transferred, Mr Phairot said.

Illegal logging still exists and the department alone cannot effectively combat the practice because it lacks sufficient personnel to prevent and suppress such activity, he said.

Many wooden window and door frames are still being transported illegally from the North to Bangkok, with many arrests being made in Bangkok, he said.

The department welcomes any tip-off leading to suppression of illegal logging and forest encroachment, he said. He will act to improve the image of forestry officials and work to save the country's remaining forests.

Asked about the possibility of Thai logging firms with concessions in Burma felling Thai trees and slipping in the logs as Burmese timber, Mr Phairot said he thinks this is unlikely.

The concessionaires run a multi-million dollar business and this illegal practice would lead to the loss of their concession. He had been told by the firms that trees are so abundant in Burma they cannot fell all the trees in their concession period.

The firms have an agreement with the department that if they are found to be involved in any illegal activity, their concession rights will be terminated. Mr Phairot said Thai trees are not of the same quality as those on the Burmese side.

The department chief said illegal logging could occur along the Thai-Burmese border, but this could be the action of small-scale illegal loggers. Many arrests have been made.

He questioned why concessionaires have to pay more money than they need to since the logs they are bringing in are legal. Nevertheless, any forestry official found to be on the take will be dealt with.

"It is better not to talk of payoffs if the concessionaires are sincere. They should tell me if any of my men are making demands and not make allegations that would demoralise many good officials who cannot be bought."

An informed Forestry source said payoffs occur when concessionaires need to transport felled logs out of the area before the start of the rainy season. Forestry and Customs officials are paid so they will work overtime.

Initially Thai concessionaires in Burma paid off Customs and Forestry officials who had to process the tax levied on the logs and issue transport permits, the source said.

But then concessionaires had to deal with other government agencies and their officials involved in internal security.

"The firms will do everything to facilitate the clear passage of the logs," the source said.

During a meeting at the Supreme Command earlier this year, which logging firms attended, the Supreme Command asked the firms if there was anything it could do to assist their operations.

The aim of the meeting was to find out if the firms faced any constraints.

The Forestry source quoted one logging concessionaire as saying that so far there were no problems, but he felt only Forestry and Customs officials should be involved in clearing the logs. If only Forestry and Customs officials were involved their costs would decrease considerably.

The concessionaire said his firm also had to deal with district officials, local and provincial police, special police action teams, border patrol police, Army-trained rangers and military officials from various agencies involved with internal security, the source said.

refugees to

DAB expects refugees to flee Burmese 'bloodbath'

THE ANTI-JUNTA Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB) has prepared areas in its liberated zones on the border with Thailand to take people who may flee Burmese military suppression expected later this month.

DAB chief spokesman Tin Maung Win said yesterday that bloody street battles in Burma, similar to the 1988 nationwide uprising when more than 1,000 people were killed by the army, are expected after renewed demonstrations.

A bloodbath has been predicted following Thursday's declaration by two opposition parties, which won more than 95 per cent of the seats in the general election in May but were barred from forming a government, that they would convene Parliament in the middle of this month.

"We will send at least 10 to 15 columns of DAB troops near to the cities and towns in case of emergency or if the Burmese people need them. We can help and give our hand to these people," Tin Maung Win said.

Tin Maung Win, who is also a chairman of the Committee for Restoration of Democracy in Burma (CRDB) whose chapters are in many countries including the United States, said the Burmese military dictators, under the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), will not easily hand power to elected representatives.

At the same time, SLORC has warned the opposition not to try to wrest power through confrontation.

There are only two weeks more before an elected government will be formed by the convening of Parliament. It is expected all concerned will be arrested or killed and demonstrations will erupt, he said.

People will not listen to the Burmese military rulers if they ban the elected government from being formed.

The DAB has discussed this mat-

taken up positions at all strategic areas.

Bunkers and road blocks have been installed to prevent demonstrations. However, if demonstrations start, the Burmese military will shoot, Tin Maung Win said.

"Today, the Burmese people live in fear. They are arrested by soldiers at night from their homes, never to come back."

His DAB group has closely monitored what is happening inside Burma, which has foreign reserves of less than US\$4 million.

The economic situation in Burma is very bad. Just before 1988,

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foreign reserves were \$20 million.

After the authorities gave timber concessions, fisheries contracts and also sold part of the land at the Burmese Embassy in Japan, they had \$232 million to \$240 million in foreign reserves.

However, his sources say that by July, only \$4 million was left.

Tin Maung Win claimed the money was used for the self-interest of the military rulers to buy arms and munitions from West Germany, Singapore and Pakistan.

"We are following news reports that at least 40 tanks were bought by Burma from China."

On behalf of the DAB Tin

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Lag in Official Burmese Vote Tally Worries Some Diplomats

By STEVEN ERLANGER

Special to The New York Times

BANGKOK, Thailand, May 29 — As results continued to trickle in today from the first multiparty elections in 30 years in Myanmar, formerly Burma, Western diplomats said the main opposition party had already won at least 66 percent of the seats in a new National Assembly.

But as of tonight, only 53 contests had been officially declared in the Government newspaper or on state radio. The main opposition group, the National League for Democracy, had won 48 of those seats, and the military-backed National Unity Party had won none. But questions were raised about the tardiness of the official count and whether the results might yet be manipulated, despite the Western diplomats' assertion that the National League for Democracy had won at least 322 of the assembly's 485 seats.

Most Western diplomats interviewed by telephone today discounted the discrepancy. To be official, the results must be hand-carried to Yangon, formerly Rangoon, along a primitive transportation system, one diplomat said.

"In any event," he continued, "to try to tamper with the election at this late stage would be obvious, and would provoke an uproar, both domestically and internationally."

Some Ominous Questions

His confidence is not universally shared by other diplomats interviewed today. And other, serious questions hang over these remarkable elections in Myanmar, where overwhelming majorities voted to repudiate the last 30

But General Ne Win is hardly likely to enjoy the prospect of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the 44-year-old leader of the National League for Democracy, emerging from house arrest to become Myanmar's Prime Minister. She is the daughter of U Aung San, considered the founder of the nation, who was assassinated in 1947, just before independence. General Ne Win was one of the original 30 in Mr. Aung San's circle and has always seen himself as the inheritor of Mr. Aung San's mantle. Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi's sweeping victory, said a senior Western diplomat, "must be like a finger in Ne Win's eye."

Under a law protecting the state from "destructive elements," Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi was sentenced last July 20 to a year of house arrest, renewable yearly. The military authorities who sentenced her thus far show no inclination to let her out early.

Without her leadership, diplomats say, her party will have a hard time handling its new responsibilities. The party has been split between young people who support her and former military men who support the party chairman, a retired general, U Tin Oo, who is currently serving three years at hard labor on a charge of sedition.

"The party will rally around Aung San Suu Kyi," a diplomat said, "but only if she is free to lead it. As so often in Burma, the personality of individuals plays a big part, and she's the only one with the requisite qualities, fame and charisma to run the party, to hold it together and provide direction."

She is also, he continued, one of the few able to contain the country's hatred for its military rulers.

"The whole focus has been to stay alive and build a political movement," a diplomat said. "There are a lot of deep problems here, and nobody's done much thinking about them."

Although the military has barred foreign journalists from Myanmar in recent months, about 60 reporters, most of them from television and news agencies, were allowed to enter the country for the elections last week.

No one is sure how the army will react.

years of military rule under Gen. Ne Win. Although Gen. Saw Maung is now the leader of the military government, General Ne Win, who formally gave up his power last July, is still believed to

PRISA/BA-57

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years of military rule under Gen. Ne Win. Although Gen. Saw Maung is now the leader of the military government, General Ne Win, who formally gave up his power last July, is still believed to be in control.

Individual members of the Foreign Ministry and the information section of the State Law and Order Committee, the name of the junta that has run the country since pro-democracy demonstrations were brutally crushed 20 months ago, have told journalists that the military is willing to hand over power to a civilian government once the newly elected assembly writes a new constitution and forms a government.

But there has not been any formal, collective statement to that effect from the State Law and Order Committee. Some diplomats and Burmese find this silence a little ominous.

Even optimistic diplomats say they cannot dismiss the possibility that some of the more conservative or vulnerable members of the military command may be adamant against allowing civilian politicians to take over, and are trying to prevent it.

Mixed Signals From Officials

Nor is there any clear set of rules or even a timetable for the convening of the new assembly, the writing of a new constitution or the forming of a government. Some military officials have said that they will set "temporary ground rules" for the assembly; others have said the assembly can behave as it wishes.

But the size of the National League for Democracy's victory is likely to make ratifying a new constitution and forming a new government easier than the military might have imagined when it agreed to hold these elections.

The attitude of the reclusive General Ne Win is also a mystery. In some sense, he set off these events by resigning his official post as chairman of the country's only party in July 1988. At the time, he said he was willing to foresee a public referendum on allowing a multi-party system. The party — the direct forerunner of the National Unity Party so thoroughly repudiated this week — objected, the idea was scrapped, and the demonstrations for democracy began to accelerate until they were put

Burmese Army's Successes Produce a New Flow

By STEVEN ERLANGER
Special to The New York Times

BANGKOK, Thailand, April 17 — Advances by Burmese troops against rebellious ethnic minorities along the Thai border are creating a new refugee problem here, with thousands of Burmese seeking shelter and assistance in Thailand.

The Thais, who have hundreds of thousands of Cambodian refugees already on their soil and who have substantial business interests in Myanmar, formerly Burma, are rapidly turning against the Burmese, many of whom are hiding out in the cities to escape the police.

Thai officials and relief workers say there are now nearly 50,000 Burmese in Thailand, most of them lacking any documentation or legal status.

Most of those seeking assistance are Burmese young people who fled after the military cracked down on a pro-democracy movement two years ago. For a time they joined forces with the ethnic rebels fighting the Government in Yangon, but a combination of disillusionment, hardship and pressure by the military have gradually driven them to seek refuge in Thailand.

Fearful that even more Burmese will be drawn to this country, the Thais have put pressure on foreign governments, relief agencies and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees not to recognize the Burmese as refugees or give them aid. The Thais have already jailed or deported large numbers of Burmese as illegal immigrants.

U.N. Agency Halts Assistance

Pressed by the Thais and by its own budget constraints, the High Commissioner's office here has stopped giving assistance of any kind even to those Burmese it recognizes as legitimate refugees, as opposed to economic migrants. It will not even interview asylum seekers from Myanmar's ethnic minorities.

"Thai officials, who asked not to be quoted by name, argued that Thailand had behaved with great tolerance, risking harm to relations with the Burmese Government. They said that Thai law does not recognize refugees, that the Burmese are here illegally, and that the Thais had resisted requests from Yangon to deport all Burmese residing here.

"We have done little harm to them and have looked the other way," a senior Thai official said. "But we have 100,000 Cambodians here already, and thousands of Vietnamese and Laotians. We have some Vietnamese here from 1954 and even Nationalist Chinese. Are we to shelter everybody?"

After the military crackdown of August and September 1988, in which more than 3,000 Burmese demonstra-



The New York Times/Steven Erlanger

Nearly 50,000 Burmese have sought refuge in neighboring Thailand, which already assists a large Cambodian-refugee population. Thailand is pressing foreign governments not to recognize or aid the Bur-

mese refugees, who fled a military crackdown on pro-democracy movement. Burmese refugees in Bangkok hid from the police recently in a tiny, furnished room shared by eight people.



The New York Times/April 18, 1990

Burmese troops have captured rebel base at Three Pagodas Pass.

tors for democracy were killed, perhaps 5,000 Burmese students fled to border areas, where a dozen ethnic minorities have been fighting for autonomy from the government in Yangon, formerly Rangoon, since the 1940's.

The students vowed to fight along-

side the minorities, but by early 1989, the number of students had dwindled to less than 3,000, and many were ill with malaria. Yet they feared persecution at home, and if discovered in Thailand, where many went to work or live temporarily, they were deported. On the border, at least, they were left alone.

But beginning with the dry season in December, the Burmese Army has made a concerted effort to attack the strongholds of the ethnic minorities along the border. In the last 10 weeks, nearly all the major camps of the Mon and the Karen have fallen, including some, like Thay Baw Bo and Three Pagodas Pass, that had been considered too remote or well-defended to attack. The Burmese are now shelling Manerplaw, headquarters for the Karen, the Democratic Alliance of Burma and the All-Burma Students' Democratic Front.

The ethnic insurgents continue to resist. But only 500 students are still fighting alongside them, and the rest have joined a large flow of noncombatant refugees farther into Thailand. Relief officials and diplomats say at least 22,000 people have crossed the border in the last 10 weeks.

How They Live Now

Many of the students wind up like Ko Hlaing Myint, 24 years old, Ko Thein Naing, 22, and Ko Aung Nge, 28, who share a tiny, bare room in Bangkok with five other Burmese youths. They each have one set of clothes, given to them by a church. The room has been

From there he made his way to Bangkok, where he was arrested after spending 76 days in jail because he had no money to pay his fine. Expelled from the Burmese border, he immediately returned to Bangkok. Last week he was interviewed by the High Commissioner's office, but received no documents and no money.

Requests for Aid Are Spurned

Mr. Hlaing Myint was a student leader at Mandalay University. He came to Bangkok in August 1988 to join the Karen, leaving his pregnant wife behind. He had a month's military training, but did not fight. He went from one camp to another, as they fell, then finally fled to Thailand. He was arrested, but the police took pity on him and gave him some money. He arrived in Bangkok Jan. 22.

The High Commissioner refused a request for assistance because officials there said he was educated and could work. But he had no papers and no work permit. He was given an appointment for an interview to see if he qualified as a refugee, but was released that morning and spent nearly a week in detention before paying a fine with money supplied by a charity. He has a new appointment with the High Commissioner's office on May 1.

"I think I cannot bear these conditions in Bangkok for a long time," Ko Hlaing Myint said. "Even for tomorrow we have no money, only 20 baht or 80 cents." But I do not know what to do.

Corrections

A front-page article and a picture caption on Monday about Easter celebrations in Poland referred incorrectly to four place names inscribed

interview with Bernard Krief, a French management consultant, misidentified the consulting group that Bernard Krief Consultants originally

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pursue the question of a Soviet-Bulgarian connection in the assassination attempt with the Bulgarian government.

The sometimes somnolent post in

Agca. Agca at one point implicated Bulgarian officials but later changed his story. Italian authorities arrested but later freed three Bulgarians charged in the case.

Envoy's Nomination To Be Withdrawn

Vreeland Rejected by Myanmar Government

By Al Kamen
Washington Post Staff Writer

The State Department said yesterday that the nomination of Frederick "Frecky" Vreeland to be U.S. ambassador to Myanmar, formerly Burma, would be withdrawn, citing a decision by the Myanmar government to reject him because of his criticism of human rights violations there.

Vreeland's nomination had run into trouble in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and with Sen. Alfonse M. D'Amato (R-N.Y.) amid allegations that he had misled Congress about his career and that, when stationed in Rome, he had attempted to deflect suspicions about a Soviet and Bulgarian connection in the 1981 assassination attempt against Pope John Paul II.

Several committee members were upset because the administration had submitted his nomination with a "cover" biography that listed him as a career Foreign Service officer instead of a Central Intelligence Agency official, according to administration and committee sources.

"A number of members were privately dismayed at having been put in the position of having to approve a man with this background in such a sensitive post," a committee source said.

State Department officials insisted that the submission of the cover resume was unintentional, and they described it as coincidental that the Myanmar government's rejection came amid the other allegations.

There was "absolutely no game plan to engineer this with the Burmese to get us off the hook," a senior State Department official said.

But D'Amato responded by saying, "If you believe that is the reason he withdrew, then you believe the moon is made out of green cheese." D'Amato said he would pursue the question of a Soviet-Bulgarian connection in the assassination attempt with the Bulgarian government.

The sometimes somnolent post in

Yangon, formerly Rangoon, is considered important now because of political tension there. Opposition party leaders, attempting to move the country toward democracy after decades of military dictatorship, have been placed under house arrest, and ruling military leaders have claimed interference in their nation's affairs by U.S. and other ambassadors.

Vreeland, 63, is the son of the late Vogue editor Diana Vreeland and a friend of President Bush's. He worked in Bush's campaign in 1988, seeking support among Americans living abroad, sources said. Vreeland did not return a telephone call from a reporter yesterday.

Department officials said that, following normal procedures for ambassadorships, the Myanmar government agreed to receive Vreeland when his nomination was first proposed. But the Myanmar government called in U.S. officials in Yangon yesterday and said he would not be accepted, citing criticisms he had made in public testimony on the human rights situation in Myanmar.

Vreeland's nomination was considered by the committee, partly in closed session, on Monday, but D'Amato obtained a postponement of a vote that had been scheduled for Tuesday. In a letter to Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), the committee's ranking minority member, D'Amato said, "I believe that there are serious questions concerning Mr. Vreeland that deserve more thorough examination than was possible at this morning's hearing." The committee had scheduled another hearing for next Tuesday.

D'Amato's concerns focused on allegations that Vreeland, while stationed in Rome in the early 1980s, had attempted to steer reporters away from pursuing a connection between Soviet and Bulgarian agents and the man convicted of shooting the pope, Mehmet Ali Agca. Agca at one point implicated Bulgarian officials but later changed his story. Italian authorities arrested but later freed three Bulgarians charged in the case.